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THE ADVENTURES OF OLAF TRYGGVESON,
KING OF NORWAY.

THE ADVENTURES
OF
OLAF TRYGGVESON,
KING OF NORWAY.

A Tale of the Tenth Century,

SHOWING HOW CHRISTIANITY WAS INTRODUCED INTO NORWAY.

BY
MRS. JOSEPH J. REED.

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P R E F A C E.

THE learned will not need to be told that the Author is indebted to the *Heimskringla* of Snorre Sturleson for the incidents narrated in the following pages. She selected them as the materials of a tale, in order to give, in a popular form, an account of the mode in which Christianity was introduced among the barbarous Northmen. Olaf Tryggveson was a hero of no ordinary stamp: his adventures have been related in various forms and are still remembered with delight in Scandinavia. Many of his most daring exploits were achieved on British soil; and his famous attack upon the city of London was worthy of a descendant of the sea-kings. They, therefore, possess peculiar interest for English readers; and the Author has endeavoured to depict them in language which, while retaining its resemblance to the simplicity of the original Norse

legends, shall be readily understood by young persons. Many valuable as well as interesting historical lessons may thus be conveyed to the mind ; and the rising generation may be made more sensible of the great blessings they enjoy, living as they do in the full light of Christianity, surrounded by Christian institutions and friends, when they compare their condition with that of the poor, benighted, and half-savage population of England and of Norway in the tenth century of the Christian Era. That this little book may contribute in some degree to such a result is the earnest hope of

THE AUTHOR.

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THE
ADVENTURES OF OLAF TRYGGVESON,
KING OF NORWAY.



CHAPTER I.

OLAF'S ANCESTORS.

A THOUSAND years ago there reigned in Norway a famous king. His name was Harold, and men called him Haarfager or the Fair-haired, from the colour of his hair. He was one of the best kings of the age in which he lived; but our story has nothing to do with him more than to show that Olaf, our hero, came of a royal stock, and could claim a parentage as famous as most of the kings of Europe, before his time or since. Harold was brave and free-handed, handsome, and of awe-inspiring mien, qualities which his son Olaf possessed in an eminent degree, and which were sung in songs of praise by a hundred scalds and bards. To this day the exploits of Harold the Fair-haired are the pride of every true Norwegian heart. But

he was a worshipper of Odin and of Thor, and offered Yule feasts and solemn sacrifices to them for peace and for fruitful seasons, as had been the custom of his forefathers, believing that the spirits of those mighty heroes still ruled in their ancestral domains, though both Odin and his son Thor and all his other sons had passed away from the earth a thousand years before.

Now Harold had another son named Eric, who was very unlike his father, for he was of a fierce and cruel temper, and had spent his youth as a sea-rover, sailing about the world with a band of pirates, plundering and destroying the towns and villages on the coasts of all the nations of Europe. And before Harold's death Eric had returned to Norway, where his kind father had bestowed on him the government of a province, as he had done likewise to his other sons. Unhappily, this caused great strife between them, and when Harold died and Eric became king, this wicked prince put his brothers to death, whence men called him *Blodœxe* or "Bloody-axe." But there was another son of Harold, whom the old king loved well, and whom he had sent to England to be taught all that could be learnt at the court of Athelstane, the king of that country. So fond was old king

Harold of this youth that when the boy sailed for England he sent him in a magnificent ship, the sails of which were purple and its beak of gold; its deck was surrounded with shields all gilded on the inside and curiously ornamented. This ship, with all its ornaments, was given to king Athelstane, who was highly delighted with it, and gave to Hakon (for that was the youth's name) a sword with a golden hilt and a blade of wonderful temper; and Hakon kept it till the day of his death. But Hakon, while he was in England, acquired what was of far more value than the manners and learning of that nation: he was there taught the doctrines of the Christian faith, and he believed in them, and was baptized, and he resolved that if ever he should be king of Norway he would teach them to his subjects.

Not many years elapsed before his wish was granted; for the Norwegians, having groaned under the tyranny of Eric of the Bloody Axe, armed themselves against him and drove him out of the country; and remembering that their famous old king, Harold the Fair-haired, had still one son living, who was in England, they sent for him to come home and be their king. Had they known he was so zealous a Christian, perhaps they

would not have done this, for they were all pagans and idolaters, and though they did not worship the gods of Greece and Rome, they did pretty much the same thing in offering sacrifices to Odin, and praying that they might be admitted into his halls of Valhalla, there to keep company with kings and heroes, and to feast and enjoy themselves until the grand conflagration of the universe should take place and chaos return, out of which a new heaven and a new earth were to arise. This was their religion; and when Hakon returned he brought with him some Christian priests to enlighten their barbarous minds. And he called together an assembly of the people at the city of Trondheim, and when they came he stood up boldly and declared it to be his will and pleasure that all present, rich and poor, noble and serf, young and old, male and female, should lay aside the vain worship of the heathen deities, and be baptized and believe in one true God, the Son of Mary, and should fast every Friday and rest every seventh day. But the people and the priests, being heathen, were not inclined to listen to him, and they plainly told him that they would abandon him and choose another king if he would not allow them to enjoy their old religion; so the

meeting dispersed, Hakon's wise counsellor, Sigurd Jarl, having in vain endeavoured to pacify them. Nevertheless, Hakon desisted not from the project he had formed, but set his missionaries to work to preach the Christian faith to the people, and he built churches in various parts of his kingdom. This roused the anger of the priests of Odin, who determined to compel him to renounce for ever the worship he was so anxious to introduce ; so they armed themselves and their attendants, and went to a place called Meere, where there was a famous temple erected to Thor, the son of Odin, and where a great sacrifice was about to be offered to that renowned warrior, at which Hakon was expected to assist. But before the king arrived they slew the Christian priests and burnt the churches, and when Hakon appeared, they surrounded and compelled him to join in their idolatrous ceremonies, making him eat the liver of a horse which had been sacrificed to their idols, and afterward empty three drinking-horns filled with wine, quaffing one to Odin, one to Thor, and one to Bragi, the god of eloquence, wisdom, and poetry. So Hakon was forced to give up for a time all his praiseworthy efforts to do good to his people.

While he was thus occupied he was surprised

to hear that Gunhilda, the widow of his brother Eric, who, as we have seen, had been driven out of Norway by the people for his tyranny, had landed on the sea-coast with her sons and some soldiers from Denmark ; so he collected as many of his own warriors as he could, and went forth to meet them ; but they came upon him sooner than he expected, and gave him a mortal wound. When he was dying, he was asked if he wished to be sent to England for burial, as that was a Christian country ; he answered and said, that if he should recover from his wound, he would leave Norway and retire to some Christian land, where he might live in seclusion and expiate his sins, and confirm his faith ; but feeling that his end drew near, he murmured, " As a heathen have I lived ; therefore, as a heathen and not as a Christian must I be buried."

His death was mourned by all ; and he was ever after reverently spoken of as "Hakon the Good." Such was the end of the first Christian king of Norway. The queen Gunhilda triumphed in her ambitious scheme, and her eldest son Harold (surnamed in the language of Norway "Graafeld," which means "Grey Mantle") was made king ; but his brothers compelled him to share his power with

them, so that he was only a king in name and not in reality ; and besides, there were Tryggve and Gudrod, the two grandsons of Harold the Fair-haired, who had separate governments of their own, the former in the Eastland, the latter in the Westfold ; and then there was Sigurd Jarl, the wise old counsellor of Hakon the Good, who was ruler of the province of Trondheim. These three chiefs were great thorns in the path of Gunhilda, so she persuaded her sons to murder them. The good people of Trondheim, indignant at the cruel murder of their venerable governor, Sigurd Jarl, elected his son, Hakon Jarl, to take his place, and they took up arms, and set Gunhilda and her sons at defiance.

CHAPTER II.

OLAF'S BIRTH.

WE have seen how Tryggve, the son of Olaf, the son of Harold the Fair-haired, was murdered by the cruel sons of the perfidious Gunhilda, at her instigation. A short time before his death he had taken for his wife, Astrida, the daughter of Eric Biodaskalde, a rich chieftain, who dwelt at Ofrostad. She was a noble minded and courageous woman ; and though her heart wellnigh burst with grief, when she heard of the dreadful end of her beloved husband, she resolved never to submit to the usurped authority of Gunhilda and her wicked sons, and she thought (and thought rightly) that her own life might be in danger ; so she sent for her faithful attendant and foster-father, the white haired Thoralf Lusiskieeg, and asked him what she had better do. Then the good Thoralf, who had held her many a time in his arms when she was an infant, and loved her as he did his own little son, Thorgils, stood up and said, " Dear Lady, thou

knowest that all I have is at thy service ; and that where thou goest, I am ready to go too. I have dwelt in the country of Trondheim, while fifty suns have risen upon it ; and to me it is the home of my youth and the abiding-place of the spirits of my ancestors, whom I often hear in the blast as it sweeps through the pines and over the mountains. Yet I would forsake it for ever, to serve thee. My counsel is that thou shouldst conceal thyself for a while, and then let me seek thy father at Ofrostad, and implore his aid ; when the tiger hath once tasted blood, his fury is never sated ; so this savage Gunhilda will seek thee and the child thou shalt bring forth, to slay both ; nor will she spare those that are with thee. Put up in a small space all the wealth thou canst carry, and let us leave Trondheim this night."

This advice pleased Astrida well, and she followed it. Her money and jewels she bestowed about her dress ; and she took the rings and the ornaments of her dead husband, as many as she could carry, and concealed them in the lining of her robe and her cloak ; and some she buried in the garden of his palace, hoping that one day she might come back and claim them. And that same night, when the town of Nidaros, where she dwelt,

was wrapt in slumber, Queen Astrida silently quitted the roof which had so lately been her husband's, and descending noiselessly into the gardens of her palace, she there met the faithful Thoralf, prepared for flight. But he came not alone. With him was his wife Alfhilda, who was Astrida's foster-mother, and his little son, Thorgils, and three stout youths, Ubbo Magnusen, Rolf Junnlang, and Thornbiold Svart, devoted friends of Thoralf and the lady Astrida.

The tall trees waved fitfully in the white light which the moon was pouring down, on Nidaros, the ancient town, and on its deep fiord, over whose bosom a long line of dazzling light stretched far away to the distant ocean. It was the beautiful season of the north, when night almost disappears, and the heavens are ruled alternately by the sun and the twilight, made more beautiful by the rosy lights of the frozen regions which are there seen in vivid splendour. The wind moaned in prophetic tone, as the lady Astrida gathered closely around her the folds of her cloak, and in a low voice directed old Thoralf to lead the way. No human sounds, save their own, broke on their ear, as they made their way through by-path and field to the road leading to the Uplands, where swell in eternal

grandeur the majestic peaks of the Doorefield mountains and the summit of the lofty Sncehatten. There lay the patrimony of Eric Biodaskalde, the bonder of Ofrostad, the father of the widowed Astrida, and thither the unhappy lady directed her steps; but many a weary mile lay between her and her father's house, and she grew faint by the way, and was fain to lie down and rest in thickets and deep glades, where no one could see her; and she and her companions were content to eat wild berries, and the coarse fare they could procure by begging at the huts of peasants: but they were very careful not to show themselves by daylight, and when night was come, then one of them went forth to seek food; and thus they journeyed for several days, for Astrida was weak, and could not walk far without resting. At length they came to the borders of a lake, wherein was a small island well covered with trees, and all around was so still and soft and peaceful, and Astrida was growing so weak, that Thoralf and his brave comrades determined to make a raft, and cross over to the island, and see whether it would suit them for a dwelling during the warm summer weather. So, when night was come, they with their axes hewed down large branches from the trees, and before

morning had bound them together with small twigs, and made a raft strong enough to carry them over the water. Yet another day had they to lie hid, and they covered up their work with leaves and boughs, lest any one passing that way might find it; but when evening was come, and the world was hushed to sleep, they stole out of their lair, and praying to Odin and to his son, Balder the beautiful, that they might find favour in their eyes (for these poor honest men were heathens all the time), they boldly put out in their frail bark, and paddled it across the lake to the island. This they carefully examined, and finding that it had no inhabitants, and was full of caves and hiding places, they resolved to go back for the lady Astrida, and conceal her there until her time should be past. So they returned; and they thought that Balder looked down upon them with a loving glance for their good action, as they moved gently over the glassy surface of the lake. And Astrida, and her foster-mother Alfhilda, and the little Thorgils, were anxiously watching them, and hastened to meet them; and when they heard what Thoralf had to say about the island, they thought that the gods had especially selected this place for the birth of the infant of Astrida. They

then placed on the frail bark all that they had brought with them, and trusting themselves fearlessly to it, again launched forth upon the bosom of the lake. Picture to yourself that poor lady, forced to wander thus by night, to save herself from enemies worse than wild beasts; her husband cruelly murdered a few days previously, her friends scattered, exiled, or put to death; all save the devoted few who stood around her, in the hour of her agony. She thought of all the gods of her fathers, and probably of the great spirit whom, under the name of Odin, she ignorantly worshipped—and wondered if they heard, or saw, or pitied her distress. Yet, doubtless, there was One who heeded her throughout all her trials. Had she but been taught to know Him, what comfort had been hers! But she knew Him but dimly; for Hakon the Good had not been able to make Norway a Christian country.

That night Astrida lay down in peace: her bed was made in a cave, and formed of rushes and dried leaves, and her cloak was the coverlet. She knew that loving hearts and watchful eyes were around her; and no enemy could take her by surprise. By night the faithful youths, who guarded her, crossed over to the shore, and roaming

through the neighbouring woods, would sometimes kill a deer or a kid with their arrows, and when daylight was passed they would return with their stock of food. And in this way did they contrive to live—not quite so comfortably, you will say, as if they had been in Astrida's palace at Nidaros, but in far greater safety—for Gunhilda and her sons knew not where to find her. And in a few days her child was born, and she joyed exceedingly that it was a boy. Then she caused water to be poured over it, not by way of Christian baptism, but after the manner of her heathen ancestors, who thus dedicated their children to the gods. And she named him Olaf, after his father's father: and thus did this famous king come into the world.

CHAPTER III.

ASTRIDA'S FLIGHT.

IN the solitude of the lonely island did the lady Astrida nurse the babe which God had given her ; sad and dreary was her lot, for her love for the child caused her the more dread of being discovered. Her faithful companions in exile did all they could to comfort her, and while the fine mild summer weather lasted all went tolerably well ; but when the days began to grow short, and the nights to become chill, it was seen that the island was no home for one brought up in the house of plenty. So it was arranged that Astrida, with her infant son, should endeavour to make her way to her father's house at Ofrostad, and that Thoralf and his wife, with the young men, should accompany her as before, travelling on foot by night and concealing themselves by day. They once more embarked on their frail raft, and landed on the shore of the mainland in safety. They broke up the raft, and scattered the pieces far and wide,

lest they might give warning to their pursuers that fugitives had been there. And so calling upon their ancestral gods for aid, they betook themselves to their journey.

What were Queen Gunhilda and her sons doing all this time? After the murder of King Tryggve, they went to his domain in search of Astrida, but found her not. They made inquiry after her, but could learn nothing; then they went away to the north to subdue the country of Viken, and to attack Earl Hakon in Trondheim, and in these wars they passed the autumn and the winter. But somehow it was told to Gunhilda that a son was born to the lady Astrida, and was therefore heir to the throne of all Norway. And she knew that she and her sons had no right to it—that they had got possession of it by murder, and violence, and fraud—which, when she had duly reflected on, made her secretly hate Astrida, and resolve to put her and her infant out of the world, as she had done Astrida's husband. Thus one crime ever draws on another!

This guilty queen then sent spies to the Uplands, where she thought Astrida was, and charged them strictly to find out her place of concealment, and whether it was true that she had a little son;

but the spies tried in vain to discover her retreat, and though they roamed through that country in various disguises, and made diligent search, they were fain to return to Gunhilda no wiser than when they set out. Then was Gunhilda exceedingly wroth, and she resolved to send armed men to search the houses of Astrida's friends, and bring her to her by force; and she charged Hakon, one of her principal captains, with the cruel errand, bidding him take with him thirty of his bravest men, well armed, and mounted upon fleet horses, and go first to the house of Eric Biodaskalde at Ofrostad. Now this was in the spring time, and Astrida had long months before made her way through glen and dell, and chasm and forest, in that wild and romantic land, to her father's domain. It was dark when she arrived there; and she sent a message privately to him to let him know her situation. The good old man gladly welcomed her, and spread a gay table for her and her friends: and her heart was cheered for a time. Old Eric sent back the three youths who had brought her thus far in safety, and they returned laden with presents from the noble old bonder. But Thoralf and his wife and his little son, Thorgils, remained with her, and abode there

all the winter. Astrida by degrees regained her spirits, and little Olaf grew apace a beautiful child, in whom all took delight.

The spring was come again "with all its reckless birds upon the wing," and nature gradually resumed her mantle of gladness. Astrida's favourite pastime was to sit in the porch of her father's house, playing with and nursing her infant hero, while old Eric would look on and shake his sides with laughter at the tricks of the child. But one evening their mirth was turned to sadness, and their smiles to tears, for there came one who told them that he had seen afar off a troop of armed horsemen, and by their movements he judged that they were in pursuit of some one. The name "Gunhilda" rose, as by magic, at the same instant to the lips of Eric and Astrida. "Betrayed!" she exclaimed, clasping her Olaf in terror to her bosom. The evening was waning and night drew on apace.

"Daughter, no time is to be lost," said Eric, "if thou wouldst save thy life and that of thy son: take such attendants and store with thee as thou mayst need, and hie on thy way to the pass of Syl Fiellen, thence on the road to Storsjo in Sweden. There dwells mine ancient and well-beloved friend and companion in arms, Hakon Gamle. Give

him the letter I will write for thee, and he will afford thee shelter and protection." Short time had Astrida to prepare for her toilsome journey, and her heart sank within her as she gazed eastward at the lofty mountain peaks of the Dovrefield, over which her path lay, for she foresaw the perils and fatigues she would have to encounter. Besides, she must quit her father's roof for the abode of the stranger, and in another land too! But then she thought of her little Olaf, and as she gazed fondly on his cherub form and features, the mother's heart was nerved for its trials.

Yet her soul was sad, and her spirit heavy, as she kissed her aged father, and took the road to the mountains which form an eternal barrier between Sweden and Norway. All day she travelled, and night was fast closing round her; the guides hurried her along towards the spot they had selected for her resting-place that day. She was accompanied by her ever-faithful Thoralf and Alfhilda, with their little son. After journeying many hours they beheld a large mansion, and bethought themselves of asking hospitality of the owner of the place, which was called Skon, but this man was a churl, and drove them away with curses; so they journeyed further, and pre-

sently reached the domain of Vither, which was bonded by the hospitable Thorstein, who gave them lodging and food, and they slept well for a while. But that same morning Queen Gunhilda's men had come to Ofrostad and searched for her. Eric had stoutly denied that she had been there, so they were forced to content themselves with this answer, although they did not believe him. Then they searched further, and came to Skon, where they learnt that strangers had been and sought hospitality, also that these strangers had taken the road to Fiellen. But, fortunately, Hakon, the captain, was slow in his movements, and he was more careful of himself than of any other thing. So he forced the inhospitable farmer (or bonder, as the farmers are termed) to set meat before him and his men. Now it happened that while they were eating, one of Thorstein's labourers came by and called in at the house, and finding it full of armed men, he inquired their business. Then he hastened on to Thorstein, and told him the news ; so the good farmer roused his sleeping guests, and giving them a guide and some provisions, he bade them God-speed. The fugitives followed their guide, who led them far out of their road into a dreary forest, where there was water,

and in it an islet overgrown with reeds. Into this secluded spot Astrida and her boy were carried, the men wading deep through the water to reach the islet. There they all hid themselves. Meanwhile their pursuers came leisurely on to Thorstein's house, inquiring after Astrida as they went. Here they found the honest bonder, who told them that some persons answering to the description of Astrida and her friends had been there, but had departed at daybreak towards the forest. Thereupon Hakon and his men made Thorstein go with them to point out all the paths and hiding places. He made no objection, but was resolved in his heart that they should not find the lady they were in search of, so he led them about and about the whole day, to no purpose, until they were weary. Then they gave up the pursuit, and returned to Gunhilda to tell her of their want of success. Thorstein watched their departure, then he released Astrida and her friends from their irksome hiding place, and they pursued their journey to Sweden. In a few days they were welcomed at Storsjo by Eric's good and true friend, Hakon "the Old."

CHAPTER IV.

OLAF'S CHILDHOOD.

AT this time there reigned in Sweden an aged king, called Eric the Victorious; and when the cruel Gunhilda heard of Astrida's escape, she sent her captain, Hakon, with many presents and kind messages to the old monarch, in hopes of making friends with him, and of persuading him to give orders that Astrida and Olaf should be delivered up to her. In those barbarous times, it was usual for neighbouring kings to assist one another in getting hold of runaway subjects; and as old Eric did not know that Gunhilda's intentions towards Astrida and her child were so bad as they really were, he gave the order she asked for, and also commanded several attendants to accompany the queen's messenger to Hakon the Old, and persuade him to yield up his guests. So Hakon, the messenger, set forth and journeyed till he came to the house of Hakon the Old; whom, when he saw, he treated with the greatest respect, and with

many professions of friendship for Astrida and the child, tried to induce the venerable bonder to give them up. But the latter, acting in an equally friendly manner, replied that as far as he was concerned, the lady and her child were welcome either to go or stay, but that he would not press her to do one or the other: so that it depended entirely on herself. Now, when Astrida was asked whether she would go or not, she at once refused to leave old Hakon's house; and as the other Hakon did not dare to use force to compel her, he was fain to return to King Eric, and tell him of his want of success. He also asked him for some assistance to take the boy, whether old Hakon liked it or not, and the king consented, and gave him some more attendants. So he went back to Hakon the old, and demanded that Olaf should be given up to him. Whereupon the brave old man refused to listen to him, and dared him to touch the boy; and while he spoke, his servants gathered round him armed, some with weapons, and some with sticks, so that when Gunhilda's envoy threatened violence, they rushed upon him and his men, and he escaped with his life with great difficulty. After this, he became disheartened; and, giving up the attempt to capture Olaf, he

returned to Norway to inform the queen of all that he had done, with which she was very ill satisfied.

But Astrida, though she and her little son had escaped this time through the firmness of her kind and brave old friend, became alarmed for her safety—for she remembered that Hakon Gamle was an old man, and might soon die, and then she would be without a protector—and she was too near to Norway not to be liable to constant attempts against herself and her child while Gunhilda and her sons lived. Then she bethought herself of her brother, Sigurd, who, many years before, had entered into the service of the famous Vladimir Monomachus, Grand Prince of Russia, and who was much esteemed for his prudence and valour by that prince. So much confidence had Vladimir in Sigurd's honesty and ability, that he had appointed him receiver and collector of his rents and taxes, and this important office Sigurd now filled. Astrida had not seen her brother for a very long time; but she had heard tidings of him, occasionally, through the merchants who traded between Norway and the rich city of Novogorod, which was the largest town in King Vladimir's dominions, and she knew that he was

rich and powerful. So she made up her mind to go to him, and she told her wish to the good old Hakon, who approved of her scheme, and gave her money and clothes and attendants, and all that was necessary for so long and dangerous a journey. They parted with great grief, for Astrida had now lived two years under the roof of Hakon, and her noble boy Olaf was the light of the old man's eyes: the child was now three years of age, and remarkably handsome, strong, and intelligent. Thoralf and his son Thorgils also resolved to go with her. The faithful Alfhilda had died a short time before.

In those days, and for many hundreds of years before, the seas in those parts had been infested by pirates, who called themselves vikings, or kings of the sea. And they had their stronghold in the island of Gothland in the Baltic, whence they sallied forth from time to time to plunder the coasts of Sweden and of Livonia and Esthonia—and to intercept ships laden with merchandize, trading between those countries. Now, the course which the ship had to steer, that bore the lady and her son from Sweden to the coast of Livonia, lay right in the path of these pirates, so that when the vessel was fairly out to sea, she encountered a

large ship filled with these savage men, who, as soon as they perceived her, bore down upon her, and commenced shooting arrows and slinging stones at those who were standing on her deck, and killed so many of them that the ship could not be worked. Then the pirates boarded her, and they made all the crew and the passengers stand before them; and those that were old, or weak, or deformed, they killed—the rest they divided between them for slaves. Unfortunately, poor Astrida was chosen by one fierce-looking man, while Olaf was taken by another, whose name was Klerkon, and who also got the faithful old Thoralf and little Thorgils as his share of the booty. But what words can paint Astrida's grief and Olaf's terror, when the cruel Klerkon, deliberately taking up an axe, struck Thoralf dead with it, saying that he was too old to be of use to any one! Alas! the poor mother's griefs were scarcely begun; for when the pirates' ship came into harbour, Klerkon took Olaf and Thorgils ashore, and sold them to a man named Kleerk, not for gold, but for a ram, thus putting the two children on a level with an animal! Astrida sunk down in a swoon when she saw her child thus taken away from her. He was too young to

understand what was going on around him, and was more occupied in noticing the strange people he was with than thinking of his poor mother, for he was a child of an adventurous spirit: but *she* thought that she had seen him for the last time. When Olaf grew to be a man, and was told of all this, he tried to find out what had become of his mother; but all he could learn was that the pirate who had taken her prisoner had carried her away, and no one had ever heard of either of them since. Nor was she heard of for many a long year, as we shall see in the sequel.

The man who paid a ram for Olaf, wanted a cloak when winter came, and as he had a neighbour who had one to sell, the two made a bargain, and Olaf was sold for a cloak. His new master's name was Reas, and both he and his wife were very kind people, and took a fancy to Olaf, so that he was very well treated, and was much beloved by the household. Here he remained for six years, and here he might have remained always but for an accident. It so happened that Sigurd, the tax-collector of King Vladimir, came round to the city where Reas dwelt to collect the taxes; and walking in the market-place, he observed a remarkably handsome boy, whose appearance was

very unlike that of the children of the inhabitants. Stepping up to him, he asked of him his name and what family he belonged to. Now Thorgils, who was several years older than Olaf, had told the latter all about his father, King Tryggve, and his mother Astrida, so that Olaf was able to answer the questions. Then Sigurd knew he was his sister's son, and asked him how he came there. Olaf told him all his adventures, as well as he could recollect them ; so Sigurd, without telling him who he was, bought him from Reas, and also bought Thorgils, and took them both back with him to Novogorod.

CHAPTER V.

OLAF'S YOUTH.

OF all the great cities of the earth, Novogorod was one of the greatest at the time when Olaf lived. It was distinguished, far above all the other cities of Russia, for its wealth and independence, and the Russians were so proud of it that it grew to be a common saying amongst them:—"Who shall dare to oppose God and great Novogorod?" which feeling was akin to the pride of mighty Babylon of old, when it revelled in its wealth and its iniquities. But Novogorod was a great commercial city, and traded with all the countries then known, so that people from every nation were to be found within its streets. Yet what was strangest of all was that this great city, though situated in a despotic country, was a republic, and its inhabitants had the spirit, and courage, and independence of republicans, though its chief was a prince of the blood of the house of Rurik. This chief was called the Namestuick,

but he was merely the head magistrate, and was bound to govern according to the laws of the city; nor had he any power beyond this. The city was nominally subject to the Grand Duke of Russia, who had certain privileges there. Fortunately for Novogorod and for Russia, the present Grand Duke was a good as well as a great man, and had saved his country from great peril on more than one occasion. His name, Vladimir Monomachus, has been, accordingly, held in veneration ever since. Such was Sigurd's master. "Like master, like man," and such was Sigurd, who had bought little Olaf.

Olaf was nine years old, as we have seen, when he came to Russia, and was very handsome and quick. He was fond of martial toys and martial pictures, and nothing delighted him so much as witnessing the movements of soldiers, and the display of activity and skill in leaping, wrestling, running, and other athletic exercises. One day he was in the market-place, where there were usually large crowds of people: his uncle, Sigurd, had bought him a little axe, with which he was mightily pleased, and he was for chopping everything that came in his way. Before the day was out, however, he made use of his axe in an

unexpected manner ; for in the midst of the throng he caught sight of a man whom he thought he knew : he followed him for some time to make sure he was right, and finally satisfied himself that this person was no other than Klerkon, the Esthonian pirate, who had so cruelly torn him from his mother, and murdered poor old Thoralf Lusiskieeg, his foster-father. Though Olaf was but three years old when these events occurred, yet they had made so vivid an impression on him, that he had never forgotten the scene, nor the features of the actors in it. His thoughts crowded fast upon him, and his anger rose as he followed Klerkon, until at length, watching his opportunity, he ran behind him, and striking him on the head with his axe, he clove his skull down to the brain. He was very much alarmed at what he had done, when he saw the man lying dead on the ground, and people running up to see what was the matter ; so he dashed into the crowd, and made his way home, where he found Sigurd, and told him what he had done. Now Sigurd knew that by the laws of Novogorod it was death to kill any one who had not been lawfully condemned, and he thought it would not be long before the crowd would come and demand that Olaf should be given up to

justice ; so he took the lad to the palace of the queen, told her what had happened, and begged her to protect him. The queen was attracted by the comely looks and noble aspect of the boy, and readily declared her willingness to do all she could to save him ; so she ordered her soldiers to be called out and drawn up in front of the palace. And by the time this was done, the people came shouting and yelling through the streets, having by some means found out who had killed the man, and whither the slayer had fled for refuge. However, when they saw the soldiers they desisted from their clamour, though they did not disperse, but consulted with themselves what they had better do.

Meanwhile it was told to the king that there was a tumult at the palace, so he forthwith hastened thither to put an end to the strife, which he did thus. He sent for the chief magistrate of the district, and offered to pay such a fine to the city as should be agreed upon to satisfy the people and save the boy. Accordingly, a sum was named and paid, and so the matter ended.

But it was the stepping-stone of Olaf's fortune ; for the queen took such a fancy to him that she would not part with him. Now, when Sigurd saw

this, he thought he had better tell her who Olaf was. Accordingly, he told her how Olaf was the son of Tryggve Olafsson, king of Norway, who had been murdered, and how his mother had fled to Sweden to escape from her husband's murderers, and how she had set out to come to Russia, but had been carried away captive by pirates, and had never more been heard of; and, lastly, that he himself was his uncle. Then the queen's sympathies were roused, and her heart yearned towards the lad, and she besought the king to have pity on him, that he might not be sent from her, for by the laws of Novogorod no person of royal birth could stay in that city without the king's consent. And the king, who was all goodness, received Olaf kindly, and treated him as the son of a king, and caused him to be instructed in all that was befitting his high station. It fared well with the youth all the time that he chose to remain with King Vladimir, and he grew to be very handsome, stout, and strong; he excelled in riding, wrestling, wielding the spear and the sword, swimming, and all manly exercises, and his reputation spread far and wide. He was as dexterous with his left hand as with his right, and could perform many feats of the jugglers; for instance, he could make three

sharp daggers continually rise in the air, catching them as they fell by the handle, and throwing them up in quick succession, so that they appeared to move round in a circle. He could also run round a boat upon the oars while the boatmen were rowing, and many strange feats could he perform, which were more curious than useful. So highly did King Vladimir esteem him, that he made him chief over the men-at-arms whom he sent out to defend the land against the Varangians, the Tschuder, and the Biarmians, and other fierce rovers and pirates who infested the seas; and Olaf fought several battles: all of them he won, and he was much beloved by his soldiers; for he was very generous to them, and as the king allowed him a handsome revenue, he maintained a great many men-at-arms at his own expense.

Now, as Olaf grew in years and beauty, he found greater favour than ever in the eyes of the queen—and there were not wanting those who reported this to the king in such a manner as to disparage the young prince—for it always happens that favourites have many enemies, and, as Olaf was a foreigner, the youths of Russia were envious of his good fortune. It was then the custom at the courts of great monarchs that the queen

should have as many attendants as the king, and both strove to obtain the finest-looking men ; and at the court of King Vladimir this custom was observed likewise. Queen Allogia was very desirous to have Olaf for one of her attendants, whereupon King Vladimir grew silent, and his brow was dark towards the youth, and he ceased to be as kind to him as heretofore. When Olaf noticed this, he told it to the queen, and they took counsel together, and the end of it all was that Olaf thought he had better leave the country, and seek his fortune elsewhere. He had a strong desire to visit his native land, if he might do so with safety. And the queen, with sorrow in her heart, bade him God-speed, and commended his bravery ; but she would have preferred his staying where he was. The king said nothing, so Olaf hired a number of daring followers, and bought a ship, and sailed out to sea. He had been nine years with King Vladimir, and was now eighteen years of age.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW OLAF GOT MARRIED THE FIRST TIME.

WE must not judge by our own standard the actions of those who lived a thousand years ago. Times have changed since then, and we have changed with them. Thus, though it may now seem very wicked to fit out ships for the purpose of robbing and murdering, it was not then thought wrong to do it. On the contrary, those bold adventurers who cared nothing for their own lives or the lives of other people, and braved all sorts of danger from love of excitement, were thought great heroes. And thus it was that Olaf, following in the footsteps of his forefathers, began his career as a rover, or pirate, or viking, or whatever else you like to call it.

He sailed from the coast of Esthonia, and proceeded to the north, landing whenever he was near the coast, and saw anything worth taking, and plundering the unfortunate towns and villages. In this way he visited the coasts of Finland and

Sweden, and the adjacent islands, and carried off a large booty, though he sometimes had a hard fight with the people on shore. He was very successful in his trade of pirate; and after cruising for some time he put into harbour in the island of Bornholm to enjoy himself, but there arose such a dreadful storm from the north, that his ship was driven out to sea, and he was forced to scud before the wind, and when the storm abated he found himself off the coast of Vendland, or what is now called Eastern Prussia; and being fortunate enough to find a good harbour, he sailed into it, and cast anchor there. Then Olaf and his companions went ashore with their booty, and sold it for money, realizing a large sum, which enabled them to live in luxury for a time. They remained here very peaceably, eating and drinking, and making merry with the people of the country, who thought them very great personages. At this time, Vendland was governed by a king, called Burislaf, who had three daughters,—Geyra, Gunhilda, and Astrida,—and he had given to each of them a portion of his kingdom to govern, and that part of it wherein Olaf had landed was governed by the eldest, the Princess Geyra. Rumours came to the ears of the princess, that the strangers were men of distin-

guished appearance and peaceable manners, and that their chief was a young man of remarkable beauty; and her curiosity was roused, so that she summoned her principal advisers, and asked their counsel what she should do. Then one of them, whose name was Dixin, offered to go to the strangers, and in her name invite them to take up their winter abode with her, for the summer was well-nigh past, and the stormy season was at hand. Now, when Dixin was come to Olaf, he was greatly surprised at his noble appearance, and gave him a most friendly invitation to visit the Princess Geyra; and Olaf, who had often heard mention made of her, and of her beauty, and goodness, was in no-wise loth to accept it. Adorning himself to the best advantage, he appeared before the princess, who was greatly charmed with him, and made him seat himself beside her. And she inquired of him the history of his life, which when he had related, she was still more pleased to find that he was of royal birth; and he on his part was equally well pleased with her, so that they soon grew to love each other, and Olaf at last asked her to marry him. Geyra was overjoyed; and Olaf married her that same winter, and became ruler with her over her dominions. Thus his good fortune followed

him always, and whereas he had been a fugitive and a slave, he was now, though only nineteen years of age, a king, and the husband of a beautiful princess.

You would think he had now wherewith to make himself happy ; but no. Olaf was fond of adventure, and of the excitement of war ; it was, indeed, a passion with him, and in his heart he cared more for glory, as it is called, than for the blessings of peace. In the half-barbarous age and country that he lived in, war was considered a pastime, and the strong lorded it over the weak whenever they could. Now, many of the provinces, which were under the rule of Queen Geyra, revolted, and refused to pay the taxes ; and Olaf, who had been nearly six months doing little else besides enjoying himself, and had grown tired of an idle life, was glad of the opportunity to show off his prowess against these rebel vassals. Accordingly, putting himself at the head of his men, he marched against them and fought with them, killing many, and destroying their houses and property, until at length they were fain to submit to him, and pay all the arrears of taxes due to the queen. This little exploit gave him a thirst for attempting something greater ; and in the spring he fitted out some

ships, and sailed out to sea on a roving excursion, in pursuit of excitement and plunder. He steered his course towards Sweden, and landed on the coast of the province of Scania: here the people collected in great numbers to oppose him, and as soon as he had landed, they gave him battle; but he and his stout warriors bore down all before them, and the Scanians fled, and Olaf acquired a great booty. He then set sail, and proceeded eastward, towards the island of Gothland, where he did as he had done in Scania, and carried off more plunder, with which he was well satisfied, and steered back to Vendland; but on his way he fell in with a large vessel laden with goods, which was a Swedish ship, and had a brave crew on board. However, Olaf disdained easy conquests, and was glad that the merchants were brave, for he had great trouble in taking their ship, and they would not surrender to him, but were all slain. After this cruel exploit, Olaf returned to Vendland, where he was welcomed by his wife, Geyra, who loved him with all her heart.

About this time the Emperor, Otho III. of Germany, made war upon Harold, king of Denmark, and commanded him to embrace the true faith and be baptized, on pain of destruction;

but the Danish King refused to submit; then the emperor raised a great army out of Germany, France, Holland, and Prussia, and marched against Harold. Amongst the vassals of the Emperor was Burislaf, king of Vendland, and he, with his son-in-law, Olaf, joined the standard of Otho, and marched to the frontiers of Denmark. Then Harold, mounting the great Danish wall, which had been built two hundred years before, and guarded the country on the south, slew the invaders as they came up; and many a contest took place in the ditches and on the ramparts: but not all the valour of all the host of Otho, nor of Olaf himself, could make any impression, so that at last the emperor turned back. He then collected ships, and, crossing the sea, he landed in Jutland, whither he was followed by Burislaf and Olaf. When Harold heard this, he marched out to meet the emperor. It was near the city of Sleswig that the battle took place, and Harold was worsted, and fled to Lymfjord and the Isle of Mors. Then Otho sent a messenger to Harold proposing a truce, and that they should meet and talk, which if he had done at first, it would have saved great expense and trouble, as well as misery and loss of life. So

they met, and Harold and his army were baptized into the Christian faith; and, what is strange after such a beginning, Harold became a steadfast Christian unto death; but we are not told that all his soldiers were like him. Had it been so, the emperor would have done some good by making war upon Denmark as he had done. He parted in friendship with the Danish king, and returned to his own country, and King Burislaf returned to his, and Olaf went with him.

Again his fond wife welcomed him; and this was the last time he parted from her until the final separation came, which it did three years afterwards. For Geyra fell sick of a mortal disease, and she passed away from this world to another, to the great grief of Olaf, who loved her tenderly, and refused to be comforted after her death. Such is the way with those who seek not for consolation where alone it is to be found; but Olaf was as yet a heathen.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW OLAF PASSED HIS WIDOWERHOOD.

LEARNING was not of much account in those days, and even had it been, Olaf was not one to turn his mind to it; nor was he content to remain in Vendland, for everything there reminded him of his lost wife. So he returned to his old ways, and, fitting out a fleet of war-ships, on board of which he easily persuaded a number of daring youths to follow him, he bade adieu to his father-in-law, King Burislaf, and to Vendland, resolved to seek for a home, and perhaps a kingdom, wherever fortune might lead him.

Many sad thoughts arose in his mind, as the land where he had sojourned so long and happily with his Geyra faded from his view. But he was young, and grief is but transient in youthful hearts; besides, the world was all before him, and as his ship danced upon the waters, and the sails filled, and his brave companions talked and laughed and sang around him, his sorrow gave

way, and he was soon himself again—the same Olaf who four years before had, in like manner, quitted the court of King Vladimir to seek his fortune, and had found it in Vendland. Where shall he find it next?

He first thought of the land of his birth—of that old romantic Norway, where his sires had drawn their breath; but his force was too weak to recover the throne of his ancestors, and should he fail there, his end was death. So he resolved to steer for countries he had often heard of, but never seen—that is to say, for Flanders, and France, and England, and Scotland, and Ireland. And all along the coasts of those countries did he plunder, and thus maintained himself and his men. Sometimes he found a pleasant harbour, where he anchored a while to refresh himself, and would occasionally land peaceably, and pay for his provisions, or barter his plunder for money. In this way in time he visited the north shores of Europe, and saw all the beautiful country which lies on the north-western part of France, as far south as the river Loire; and on many a plain from Friesland to Valland left he the bloody print of his battle-axe. Then he sailed northward to the British Isles, where reigned Ethelred, the

“unready” king. That unhappy country was a prey to foreign and domestic foes, and Olaf ravaged wide round the land, from the coast of Cornwall to the distant Hebrides; then south he turned towards Ireland, which he spared not, neither did he Scotland nor Wales. Finally, he came to the Scilly Isles, where he reposed for a time. Four years had he roved in his ships since he bade adieu to Vendland; and his name was a terror everywhere, though the name he bore was not exactly the one he had at his birth, for he had given out to the world that he was a Russian, and was called Ola—dreading lest his father’s enemies in Norway might find out that he was that same Olaf, the son of King Tryggve Olafsson, to whom of right the crown belonged, and who had been hid and carried away by his mother, Astrida, twenty-seven years before.

Now, while Olaf was lying in the Scilly Islands, he was told of a wise man that dwelt there, who had the power of foreseeing what would happen, and was endowed with the gift of prophecy. Many stories were told of this seer, how he had predicted things which came to pass; all of which raised Olaf’s curiosity, so that he resolved to try whether the man could tell him his fortune. Now, Olaf

was known everywhere as the handsomest and bravest and strongest man in the world, so that nothing was more likely than that the seer should recognize him if he presented himself. Therefore, he dressed up one of the handsomest and strongest of his men in fine clothes, and bade him say he was Ola, and ask what was to befall him. But the seer was not to be so easily deceived. Whether he had seen the real Olaf or not, I cannot say; it was not unlikely that he had, for Olaf had stayed long enough on the islands to be known by their inhabitants. Be that as it may, he gave the man this answer:—"Thou art not *the king*, but be thou faithful to him."

The man could get no other answer, so he returned to Olaf and told him what he had heard, all of which increased Olaf's curiosity, the more so as he was desirous to know why the seer called him *a king*. So he went himself to the seer, and demanded of him how it would fare with his fortunes. Then the seer consulted his book, and, after long consideration, he uttered these words, in a solemn voice, as if he felt their reality, and they made a deep impression on Olaf:—

"Thou wilt become a renowned king, and do wondrous deeds. Thou wilt bring many to the

true faith, to thy soul's good, and the saving of others."

"By what tokens shall I know that this will come to pass?" said Olaf.

"The tokens shall be these," replied the seer. "Even now while thou art absent from thy ships, thy followers conspire against thee. Return quickly, and thou wilt perceive this. A battle will ensue, and thou wilt be dangerously wounded; then shalt thou be borne on a shield to thy ship, where thou shalt lie seven days ere thy wounds shall be healed. When this has happened, then come again to me, and I will tell thee more."

Sadly and pensively did Olaf retrace his steps towards his ships, pondering deeply on the strange words of the seer, when, lo! there came running to him in haste some of his men, who, on seeing him, cried out,—“Great is our joy to meet with thee, oh! prince, for in thy absence Thorkeld Leire has set up to be our leader, and has drawn away many of thy men. He says they are weary of thee, and long to see again their own Vendland.” Then Olaf felt more heavy at heart than he had ever done before, for he had been kind to Thorkeld Leire, and had heaped favours upon him. Had Olaf known the heart of man better,

he would have rightly judged that this man would have been the first to turn against him. Besides, the words of the seer had sunk into his soul, and he felt as though he were going down to death. Yet said he nought of all this, but bade his followers get ready their arms, and summon around his banner those who remained faithful to him; which, when done, he led them boldly against Thorkeld Leire and the rebels, who were also aided by some of the people of the country. Desperately did they fight, for they knew they had no hope of pardon from Olaf. In the thickest of the fray was the hero found, and his battle-axe played fearfully in the ranks of his enemies. Long he sought Thorkeld, that he might fight him hand to hand. At length he encountered him, though the rebel would fain have avoided his exasperated chieftain, for he knew full well the weight of his arm and the unerring stroke of his weapon; and he was now to prove both in his own person, for he soon fell to the ground, cloven through the helmet to the centre of the brain. Hitherto Olaf had escaped unhurt; and, when he saw his foes disperse themselves and take to flight, he began to doubt the truth of the prophecy of the seer. With a loud shout he called on them to

stand and bear themselves like men; but they heeded him not, and fled the faster. In their flight they turned and shot their arrows at random, and one struck Olaf between his hauberk and his helm, and pierced his neck, and another entered between the greaves of his armour, and pierced his leg. He soon sank down from loss of blood, and became speechless; and, while thus prostrate, his faithful followers took a narrow and long shield, the longest they could find, and, placing Olaf on it, they raised him on their shoulders, and bore him to his ship, where they dressed his wounds and laid him on his bed.

CHAPTER VIII.

OLAF TURNS CHRISTIAN.

WHEN Olaf recovered his senses, and found himself lying on his bed grievously wounded, he called to mind the prediction of the seer, and wondered at it more and more. At last he thought that a great warning to him had been intended by the gods, and he vowed that if he should recover, he would offer up a great sacrifice to Odin in token of his gratitude. But when he fell asleep, there came to him a dream. And this was his dream. He was walking in a dreary land surrounded by high hills, and his road led him to the brink of a precipice before he knew that he was in such danger: the ground began to slip from under him, and he clutched at what he might to save himself from falling into the yawning abyss; but he found nothing except weak twigs, which gave way as he seized them. In his despair, he called aloud for help, but no one came, and he was about to resign himself to death, when lo, a youth of beauti-

ful and radiant countenance, clad in white robes, stood beside him, and smiling benignantly upon him, pointed to a distant hill, whereon stood a cross which Olaf had not noticed before. A bright light shone round about it, but a suffering and sorrowing form was nailed to it. Yet, though so far off, Olaf thought that the eyes of the sufferer were fixed upon him with a tender love, and turned to the angel who stood beside him to ask who the sufferer was. "That Divine Being is Jesus of Nazareth, the God of the Christians," replied the shining one; "He has died for thee, Olaf! He will save thee from destruction." At the same time, the dreamer seemed to regain a firm footing on the ground. "Died for me!" he exclaimed, "and wherefore?" He turned to the angel, but he had disappeared; he turned towards the cross, but he saw his own spear head instead, and near him stood an attendant in a loose white robe: the dream was ended, the sleeper was awake. But his dream was the subject of his waking thoughts; and he longed impatiently for the time when he might rise from his bed and seek the seer. Seven days passed—long, long they seemed to him, but they passed away at last as other days do, and will do until time shall be no more. And we shall

pass away with them, as Olaf has done long since — ay more than three hundred thousand days since. And when the seventh day was come, Olaf stood upright, and was able to walk, as the seer had foretold; and his first act was to go to that wise man's dwelling.

When Olaf saw him, he bowed himself before him, and said, "Oh! wisest of men, not the witch-wife Hulda, nor the mighty Odin himself, could have foretold more truly the things which have happened. By what power dost thou know these things? and why hast thou bid me come again to thee?"

"My son," replied the aged seer, "God hath need of thee; not that Odin whom thou dost ignorantly worship, but the God of the Christians; and he hath already signified this to thee in the vision wherein thou sawedst Jesus of Nazareth nailed to the cross—*In hoc signo vinces.*"

Then Olaf stood as one bereft of his senses; for he had not told his dream to any one, yet the seer knew it. Then he exclaimed, "Of a truth I perceive that God is with thee, since thou knowest all things."

"Not so," said the seer. "I know only those things which it pleaseth Him to let me know.

And now thou seest that He is with me ; and I have sent for thee a second time to tell thee that thou must be baptised into the Christian faith, and renounce for ever thy Odin and thy Thor, and those other valiant heroes whom thy ancestors have made into gods."

And Olaf asked the seer what it was necessary for him to do to become a Christian ; and the seer replied—

"Hie thee to a priest, thou and thy followers, and tell him thy desire to become a Christian, and he will tell thee what it is needful thou shouldst do. Obey him in all things, and thou shalt yet be king of thy native land."

Then Olaf did as the seer bade him do, and he sought a priest who should instruct him in the faith. And the fierce warrior sat like a child at the feet of the venerable man, and listened eagerly to him as he told him of the wisdom and goodness of one more powerful far than Odin : how He had created the world and placed man in a state of innocence upon it ; how sin had corrupted the race whom He had so endowed with heavenly gifts ; how, in the great plan of the redemption of the fallen race from the powers of hell, He had raised up one who had combated with and subdued

them under his feet, and revealed a glorious immortality, and a heaven nobler far than Valhalla and the halls of Odin, where the souls of the just made perfect rejoice in the presence of the Lord of Life and Light, and in celestial occupations for ever. He told him of the agony on the cross and the ascension into heaven, and of the sufferings and martyrdom of the apostles of Christ, who were truer and braver soldiers, he said, than had ever stood by the side of Olaf in his sharpest conflicts with his enemies. New thoughts and nobler aspirations filled the mind of the youthful warrior, after reflecting on all that fell from the lips of the holy man at the interviews which he had with him; and his heart was touched at the tales of Joseph and his brethren, and of Moses and the wonders in Egypt, of Gideon and Samson, of Samuel and Saul, of David and Solomon, of Daniel and the prophets, and the captivity of the chosen people.

Many months Olaf abode here; and during this time he sailed into the not far distant haven of St. Leonard's on the Sea, on the coast of Cornwall, and there the bishop baptised the haughty warrior, the terror of the coasts of the Northern Ocean, the descendant of a mighty race of heroes.

The church of the Cornish Apostle was gaily decked with flowers, while thousands of the people flocked thither to behold the great ceremony of admitting into the bosom of the Church the fierce rovers of the North. It was a bright summer's day, and all nature spoke of gladness to the heart; yet not more so could it speak than did the sight of the rough warriors who had laid aside for a time their weapons of war to make profession of the religion which teaches peace on earth and goodwill towards men. Reverently they knelt around the font, and the bishop, drawing near, sprinkled them with the holy water, and signed them each one with the sign of the cross, pronouncing over them the formula of the Church.

In peace they came, and in peace they departed. The bishop gave them his blessing, and they spread their white sails to the wind in search of other adventures. Think you that their hearts were softened? and that they had forsaken their evil ways, their deeds of violence, and their love of strife? Alas! no; but they vowed henceforth to fight with the sword against the enemies of Christ wherever they were to be found, not denying to themselves the pleasure of fighting a little on their own account if occasion should arise.

As for Olaf, his head was filled with visions of the crown of Norway, for had he not done all that the wise seer had bidden him do? and did not the seer know all that was to happen to him? Only he awaited with impatience for news from Norway, and sought everywhere to learn what had happened in that country in his absence. But he could not learn much in that distant part; and in those days tidings spread slowly from land to land: and besides, the Danes were ravaging England, so Olaf sailed northward, until he came to the coast of Wales.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW OLAF GOT MARRIED THE SECOND TIME.

WHILE Olaf was roaming along the beautiful coast of Wales, there came to him one who told him that in the county of Chester, in England, there was to be a grand assembly, which was called by the widow of an Earl of Chester who had lately died. And the object for which this assembly was called was that his widow might choose for herself a husband out of the chiefs and warriors there met. "And so," said the visitor, "as thou art one of the bravest and handsomest knights in all Christendom, I ween thou couldest not do better than try thy fortune with the rest; for the Lady Gyda is exceeding fair to look upon, and has riches enough; moreover, she is one who loves the brave, and might do worse than choose thee."

"Whom sayest thou that she is?" said Olaf.

"She comes of gentle blood, and is sister of the renowned Malachi, King of Dublin: she married

Leofric, Earl of Chester; it is now three years; and when he died, some few moons back, he left her all his broad domains and his serfs—and all his towns, rights, seignories, castles, and so forth—and a right royal prize is she,” replied his visitor.

“And is there no one who seeks her hand,” asked Olaf—“no one whom she looks favourably upon?”

“Ay, truly, is there, my brave prince; and he who comes between Alfin and his love will need his best sword and shield: for a man of might is Alfin of Nantwich, and little reckes he of aught that stays his will, and many a stout knight has fallen before his lance.”

“Think you she loves him?”

“Nay, prince, she has been heard to say that she will see all the men in her dominions of whom she may choose a husband, and that he must take his chance with the rest.”

This discourse pleased Olaf well, and set him thinking whether he might not try his fortune; for, said he, who knows but she will choose me, and if she be rich, she will perhaps aid me to return to Norway, and claim that which is my right. So he resolved to venture; but he said to

himself, "if she choose me, it shall be for my own deserts, and not for my fine clothes, so I will even go as I am." Now he had on the garments he wore at sea, when the weather was bad, though to be sure he looked handsome enough in them—all which Olaf knew very well. So on the day appointed for the grand meeting, Olaf presented himself along with his men, all well armed; for though the country was a Christian one, the men in it cared more for displaying their valour and prowess than for obeying the precepts of the Gospel. Those were sadly barbarous times: and even the women, though they turned away from the sight of blood, loved valiant warriors, and set no store by men of learning and peace.

The assembly was held in a field in front of the Lady Gyda's castle; and she was seated in a pavilion of crimson silk hangings, ornamented with rich devices, and with the armorial bearings and escutcheon of her late husband. She sat on a raised dais covered with blue satin, and attended by her women and her esquires and pages, and by minstrels who had flocked thither from all parts, to sing the praises of the beautiful countess, and of the valiant knights who were to contend for her hand. Foremost amongst the latter rode the

proud Alfin, breathing haughty defiance to his rivals, and feeling sure of gaining the fair lady. Olaf marked him well, and took note of his bearing, and of the way in which he flourished his sword, as though to strike terror into the beholders, and he longed in his heart to meet the proud champion in the lists.

Soon the trumpets sounded the signal for the knights to present themselves before the lady, and as they came to her one by one, the herald announced the name and rank of each, his deeds of arms, and his lineage. And the lady made courteous remarks to each, and bade him welcome, but she would not say which she would have until she had seen them all. You may think there was great jealousy amongst them ; and all the ladies and the beholders were curious to know who would be the favoured one. Then Alfin ordered the herald to announce that if the choice fell upon any one but himself, that one must do mortal combat with him ; and many of the knights feared him, not because they were cowards, but because they knew his prowess, and that he had never yet been worsted in single combat, and they communed moodily with each other.

Now when all the knights had presented them-

selves before the Countess Gyda, Olaf came forward and presented himself; and all the spectators murmured at his uncouth dress, and said, "Who is this fellow that dares to offer himself as a husband for our lady?" But they marked his gallant bearing, and saw that he was a handsome youth. And the lady noted this also, and when he drew near, and made his obeisance, she looked him in the face and said, "Whence art thou?" And he said, "I am called Olaf; and I am a stranger in the land." Then she questioned him further, and to all her questions he gave suitable answers; whereat she was well pleased. And she asked him if he were that same redoubted Olaf whose exploits were known to all the world. Then he answered modestly, that he knew not that his fame had reached the ears of so fair a lady, but that he was the son of the King of Norway, who had been murdered, and that he hoped ere long to recover his inheritance.

Said Gyda to him:—"Wilt thou have me if I choose thee?" And he said, "I will." But said she, "Dost thou know that for me thou wilt have to do mortal combat with yon terrible Alfin? and dost thou not fear him?"

But Olaf stood up proudly, and with a scornful

smile, he replied, "Not Alfin only, but twenty others like him would I fight to the death for thee, fair lady." Then Gyda gazed at him with wonder and delight, and said, "Many have asked me in marriage, but not one whom I like so well as thee. Acquit thyself well in this matter of Alfin, and all that I have shall be thine, and I will be thy wife."

Then Olaf knelt at her feet, and raised her hand to his lips and kissed it; and by that, the spectators knew that he was the chosen one. And Olaf commanded the heralds to sound the defiance, and he stepped forth on to the plain to meet the furious Alfin. Now Alfin was clad in armour, and had his shield before him, but Olaf was clad only in coarse garments and had on no armour, and had only a battle-axe in his hand. So Alfin, curling his lip with contempt, thought he should have an easy victory, and jeeringly asked Olaf if he had confessed his sins to a priest before he came to meet his death. Whereto Olaf boldly answered that his time to die was not yet come, and that he should wait until he had seen Alfin laid in the earth, before he should shrive himself.

Then the two champions engaged in deadly conflict. Alfin aimed furious strokes with his

sword at his adversary ; but Olaf was very active, and avoided them all, or put them aside with his battle-axe until he could get a fair blow at him ; and when he did he struck Alfin down to the ground, and calling to his men, they brought cords wherewith they bound Alfin, and carried him prisoner to Olaf's tent, and he then returned to Gyda's side, who gave him her hand, and led the way to her castle, where they had great rejoicings, and were married. And as for Alfin, Olaf ordered him to quit the country, and never return to it ; and he took all Alfin's property, and so he became possessed of great wealth.

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CHAPTER X.

WHAT TOOK PLACE IN NORWAY WHILE OLAF
WAS AWAY.

AND how were matters going on in Norway all this time? Since Olaf left it many a child had grown to manhood, and many a man had passed from hale and vigorous maturity to old age. Many more had quitted this earthly scene of turmoil and sorrow for ever, to enter on another and perhaps a busier one. But the same scenes of lawlessness and violence prevailed in Norway as were common there when Olaf was born. The passions of men were unrestrained, and misery was the consequence.

We must go back a few years before Olaf's birth.

When Hakon the Good was slain, which happened in the year of Our Lord 963, the sons of Eric took the sovereignty of Norway, and Harold, the eldest of them, was over them in dignity. Men called him "Greyskin," because he once dressed himself in a wolf's skin. The cruel Gun-

hilda, the cause of Olaf's woes, was their mother, and meddled so much in the affairs of the state, that the people had a name also for her, which was, "King Mother." Gunhilda's sons had learnt Christianity in England, but at heart they cared very little about it, and only observed those laws which pleased themselves. They were daring and handsome men, but very greedy withal, and very fierce. Now there were in reality many kings in Norway, because every chieftain and every ruler of a province called himself one, and held his court, and did as he pleased, so long as his subjects would obey him. This was matter of grief and vexation to Gunhilda, who counselled her sons to take the lives and lands of these earls (as they were called), and so possess themselves of the whole country. And they hearkened to her counsel; and first they plotted to destroy Sigurd, Earl of Trondheim, and we have already seen that they did compass his death; but we have not seen how. It was in this wise.

That brave prince had a faithless brother, whose name was Griotgaard, who joined with Harold Greyskin and his brother Erling to murder Sigurd, and it was agreed that Griotgaard should let them know when a favourable opportunity offered. Now

in harvest-time Earl Sigurd went to Oglö to a great feast, and as he supposed he was on friendly terms with King Harold, he took but few of his people with him. Upon this, Griotgaard sent word to Harold and Erling, who sailed into Trondheim, and thence to Oglö, and came there late at night. And they heard the revel and merriment of the feasters; and quietly they fastened up the doors and windows, so that none could escape out of the house. And then they set fire to it and burnt it, and Earl Sigurd and all that were with him, and when it was daylight they sailed away.

Furious were the people of Trondheim when they heard of Earl Sigurd's death; and they chose his son, Hakon, for their earl, and they defied Gunhilda and her sons. Many a battle and many a foray laid waste the land, and for three years there was war in it; but at length peace was brought about by the friends of Hakon and the friends of Harold.

Then Harold and his brother Gudrod planned the death of Tryggve Olafsson, the father of Olaf, and invited him to cruise with them at sea in order to plunder. Tryggve accepted the invitation, and went to meet them in a single boat: they met at a place called Vegger, near Sota

Ness, where Gudrod's men rushed upon Tryggve and killed him. And the place where he is buried is called Tryggve's Cairn to this day. His wife, Astrida, fled, as we have seen, and gave birth to Olaf, our hero. And in like manner Harold and his brothers got rid of the other earls or kings, except Hakon. They, therefore, determined to drive him out of Trondheim, and collected a very large army and a number of ships, and sailed to his coast. But when Hakon heard of it he got ready a ship to escape from them, for he could by no means resist the great force they had with them. So he watched his opportunity, and, when they had cast anchors, he sailed out after dark, and made his way across to Denmark.

Now in Denmark there reigned King Harold Gormeson, and he had a nephew whose name was Gold Harold, a very ambitious man, who wanted to get a share of the kingdom. And he made a great friend of Hakon, and told him all his wishes, and as there had been a dispute between Gold Harold and his kinsmen, the former persuaded Hakon to become a mediator between him and King Harold Gormeson ; and the upshot of it was that Hakon persuaded Harold to assist Gold Harold to conquer a kingdom in Norway for himself.

Then Harold Gormeson sent an invitation to Harold Greyskin, King of Norway, to come to him, and be invested with the fiefs he held in Jutland; and after long deliberation Greyskin went over to Jutland, fearing treachery all the while; and he landed at Lymfjord, where there is a narrow neck of land. When Gold Harold heard that he had landed there, he came upon him with all his men, and challenged him to battle, and though Harold Greyskin had fewer men, he drew them up in order, and telling them to draw their swords, he led them on, hewing his enemies down bravely before him; but for all his courage, he failed to drive away his foes, and was slain with his gallant followers around him. This was about seventeen years after the death of Hakon the Good, though some say it was no more than fifteen years, which brings our history down to the year of Our Lord 975.

Gold Harold soon found the reward of his treachery, for instead of being made king of Norway, as he had hoped, he was set upon by Earl Hakon and made prisoner, and immediately hanged on a gallows. For Earl Hakon meant all the time to get Norway for himself, and had promised to be a faithful vassal to Harold Gorme-

son, if the latter would aid him. And Harold Gormeson was well pleased to get rid of his troublesome nephew, Gold Harold. This is how men behaved to each other in Norway nine hundred years ago. Many men in the present day are equally perfidious, but do not show it in the same way, because the laws are now too strong for them, otherwise I doubt not that they would.

Well, after all, Harold Gormeson, with six hundred ships and thousands of followers, set Earl Hakon on the throne of Norway ; and all those who had fled from Gunhilda and her sons now came forward and joined the earl. Gunhilda had only two sons living, these were Ragnfrid and Gudrod, and they with their mother fled to the Orkney Islands. While Eric was making himself master of Norway, Ragnfrid got together a number of ships and sailed to the northern coast, where he met Hakon. A fierce battle ensued, but both parties separated for a time, to meet again on land : this they did when spring came, and fought at a place called Sogn, where Ragnfrid was beaten and forced to take refuge in his ships. Thus did Hakon restore peace to Norway.

Soon after this Earl Hakon crossed over with an army into Denmark to help Harold Gormeson,

who was assailed by the Emperor Otho of Germany, in whose army was Olaf and his father-in-law, King Burislaf, as we have already related. There Hakon fought valiantly; but in the end the Danish king and Earl Hakon were glad to make peace with the emperor, and he consented to it if they would be baptized. So they were baptized; but when Hakon got back to Norway he renounced the Christian faith, and made a great sacrifice to Odin. But the Danish king remained a Christian, and was wroth with Hakon, and sailed over to punish him. Soon afterwards that king was slain in battle, and his son, Sweyn, "of the forked beard," reigned after him. Sweyn joined himself with the Jomsburg vikings who had sworn to plunder Norway and put Hakon and his son Eric to death, and a great expedition was sent over; but it was bravely met by Earl Hakon and Eric, who destroyed their enemies, and thus secured themselves.

While Earl Hakon ruled over Norway there were peace and plenty in the land: he was much beloved by the bonders, until, in an evil hour, he gave way to wicked courses, and provoked the anger of his people.

CHAPTER XI.

OLAF'S RETURN HOME.

WHILE a storm was thus brewing round the head of King Hakon there came to him a whisper across the wide ocean that there still lived one of the royal race of Harold the Fair-haired, who was renowned far and wide for his deeds of arms, also that he was called Olaf the Brave. Now Hakon remembered to have heard that King Tryggve Olafsson, who had been so cruelly murdered by the sons of Gunhilda, had had a son called Olaf, who had been concealed by his mother, and afterwards taken to Russia, where he had been brought up by Prince Vladimir. And the news made him very uneasy; for, thought he, if this renowned Olaf be the same Olaf who was in Russia, he will one day claim his rights, and I shall have to do battle with him. I will therefore assure myself that he is the true Olaf, and then I will deal with him as best I may. Then he called to his council a friend, whose name was Thorer Klakke, an

ancient viking, who knew well the seas and the merchants as well as the vikings of all those parts, from the far city of Ladoga to the northernmost isle of the Hebrides, and still more remote isles of Achill; and he inquired of this same Thorer Klakke concerning Olaf and his exploits, which, indeed, were well known, for Olaf had left behind him a name that was a name of terror all along the shores of the Baltic and the Northern Ocean. Thorer also knew that Olaf came from Russia, so that he had little doubt but that the famed rover was no other than the prince of Norway. But King Hakon desired to be well assured of this, and he commanded Thorer to disguise himself as a merchant and to sail away to England, and there seek out Olaf, and if by any means he could learn that he was the prince of Norway, or of the royal race, then Thorer was to devise a snare whereby that same Olaf might be brought into the power of King Hakon.

Upon this Thorer set sail for England, and in due time he arrived there; and he sailed from harbour to harbour until he got tidings of Olaf, and learnt that he was now a rich lord, and the husband of an Irish princess, and had great possessions in the county of Chester. Away sped

Thorer on his errand, and found that Olaf had gone over to Ireland to visit his wife's relations, who dwelt in Dublin. So Thorer followed him thither, and laid up his ship in the harbour for a time, and went ashore to sell his merchandize and to see if he might light on Olaf by any means. And fortune favoured him ; for one day, when he was displaying his wares, a foreigner of noble aspect, whom Thorer at once knew to be a Norwegian, came up and inquired of him the prices of his goods. So Thorer entered into conversation with him ; and little by little he turned the discourse to other things, and spoke of the sea and of the joys of a rover's life, and he noted well how Olaf's eyes sparkled as he talked. Then he spoke of the scenes he had visited, and of Jutland, and Scania, and Vendland, and Russia, while Olaf's ears devoured greedily the news. Lastly, he spoke of Norway, and of Earl Hakon, and of what was going on in that country. Then Olaf could no longer contain himself, for his heart yearned towards the home of his ancestors ; and he asked Thorer many questions touching Earl Hakon, and how he came to be king, and what had become of the sons of Gunhilda, and who would be king after Earl Hakon ? So Thorer, who was a crafty man,

feigned great surprise at meeting with one who knew so much of Norway, and asked in amaze who he might be? Then Olaf said proudly, "I am the son of that King Tryggve who was put to death by Gudrod Ericsson, and I am of the house of Harold the Fair-haired, and of right king of all Norway." By this Thorer knew that he had found out the person he was in search of.

His next thought was how to make Olaf return to Norway with him. And he laid himself in Olaf's way, so that whenever the latter went out it happened that he met Thorer, and they always stopped and talked together; and soon Olaf invited him to his house, and many a discourse had they of the olden time and of the brave deeds of Olaf's ancestors, until at length the prince was all on fire to see again his native land, and take his place amongst the princes there. Many a question did he put to Thorer of how Earl Hakon was beloved, and whether he was very powerful, and whether it was likely the people would set him aside for a king of the race of Harold the Fair-haired. To all which questions Thorer answered as Olaf hoped he would, and told him that the people were tired of King Hakon by reason of his misrule, and that they would gladly welcome a

king of the race of Harold. In short, he worked so strongly on the heart of Olaf, that the prince consulted his wife Gyda, who, being of a brave and adventurous spirit, and eager that her husband should become a king, commended his enterprise, and bade him go and conquer for himself a kingdom. Olaf, therefore, fitted out five ships well stocked with men, and arms, and provisions, and, taking leave of Gyda, he bade Thorer go on board with him, and then set sail for Norway.

How his spirits rose as he once more found himself upon the wide waters, about to return to his native land, there to win fresh renown and set up his throne ; but, above all, had he resolved to extirpate the heathen idols and to make known throughout Norway the true faith. The winds were fair which bore him through the channel of St. George to the Northern Ocean, and gaily he passed the western isles of Scotland, on, on to the distant Hebrides and Orkneys, which then owned the sway of Norway's king. And here he found a useful friend and companion in arms, though how he did it is some of the strangest, and must needs be told.

The isle of Walls is one of the southern Orkneys, and on it is the town of Osmundswall, where lie

those ships that watch the tide to pass the Firth of Pentland, through which swells a mighty mass of waters, and many a bark borne onward by the resistless stream is whirled away to destruction. Here Olaf found a ship-of-war, and on board of it was the Earl Sigurd Lodversson, who was going to Caithness. Olaf drew near with his ships, and sent word to the earl that he desired to speak with him. The earl would have resisted, but fearing the number of Olaf's ships, he went on board the one in which the prince was. Short grace did Olaf give him, for hardly had he set foot on the deck ere Olaf told him that unless he would consent to be baptized, he and all that were with him, and all the people of the island into the bargain, should be put to death, and the island should be laid waste with fire and sword. You may be sure that Earl Sigurd was sorely angered at being so taken in a snare; yet he saw that no good could come of it if he resisted, so, with what grace he might, he submitted to be baptized into the Christian faith, he and all that were with him, and likewise the people of the island. Moreover, Olaf took away Earl Sigurd's son with him as an hostage that the earl should remain a Christian; and the youth proved a staunch friend to Olaf.

In this way did this bold prince spread the Christian religion. Heaven save us! in like manner did the wild Arabs of the desert, at the command of Mohammed, the prophet of Allah, carry fire and sword into all countries from the banks of the Ganges to the pillars of Hercules and the western shores of Africa, and there plant what they deemed the true faith, the faith of Islam; and there it remains to this day! Such is the force of sharp steel!

So Olaf thought he had rendered an acceptable service to his God, and he sped cheerily on his way, believing that the Lord would look down upon him favourably for doing as he had done, and would crown him with success; also he prayed that he might be enabled to do still greater things, and plant the true faith on Norwegian soil.

CHAPTER XII.

OLAF WINS A CROWN.

THE winds and waves favoured Olaf, and in a few days he beheld again the coast of Norway. It was a small island, not far from the mainland, and called Möster Island, where he first landed; and there he caused the priests, whom he had brought with him, to celebrate high mass in token of his gratitude; and entreating further favour from heaven, he vowed that if he should regain the throne of his ancestors, he would cause a church to be built on the spot. This solemn ceremony ended, he called Thorer Klakke to his council, and asked which way he had better proceed. Thorer's object was to draw Olaf into a snare by leading him to some spot where the king's friends were strong, and in the meanwhile to give notice to Earl Hakon of his whereabouts. With this view he counselled Olaf to sail at once to Trondheim, not letting any one on shore know who he was, or why he sailed there, and so hasten his

movements as to take Hakon by surprise. By this Thorer hoped to bring him into the very thick of Earl Hakon's men; and, no doubt, it was a cunning device, and would have succeeded, but that events had happened which Thorer did not know of, and which thwarted all his schemes. The counsel was bold, and well-suited to the daring soul of Olaf; and he spread his sails to the blast, and sailed day and night, never landing nor going nearer in-shore than he needed, until he came to Agdaness at the mouth of the fiord of Trondheim. There he cast anchor, and went ashore to learn what tidings there were of the king. And he fell in with a bonder, who told him all that was passing, and that Earl Hakon, the king, was in the fiord in his ship at that very time, and that there were great troubles in the land on account of his conduct to the bonders, who would gladly rid themselves of so bad a ruler. Then Olaf went back to his ship overjoyed, for affairs were exactly as he desired them to be, and Earl Hakon was close at hand; but Thorer was secretly dismayed when he heard these things, though he pretended to share in the joy of Olaf. All was now got ready for their enterprise, and the five ships were ordered to row up the fiord to Trondheim, when,

lo! they saw three large ships coming towards them, having armed men on board. "Here comes the Earl!" cried Olaf. "I will enrich with rewards and honours the man who shall kill him." But suddenly the ships turned back; then Olaf ordered all oars to be put out in pursuit, which, those that were fleeing, beholding, they ran their ships aground, and, jumping overboard, made for the land by swimming. Olaf, seizing a tiller, struck one on the head and clove his skull; and he learned afterwards that this was Erlend, the son of Hakon, whom he had slain. Many were killed and many were taken prisoners; and those that were brought to Olaf told him that the bonders had driven away Earl Hakon, who had fled, and all his troops were dispersed.

And this is how it happened. There was a great feast in Guldal, where dwelt Orm Lyrgia, a powerful bonder, whose wife was the most beautiful woman in that country; and the king had heard of her beauty and desired to see her. Whereupon he sent his slaves with a message to Orm, the bonder, desiring him to send her back to him along with them. You may believe that Orm was not very well pleased with this message, and, in truth, he conceived in his heart a deadly

revenge, which he was not slow to put into execution. He bade the slaves seat themselves at breakfast, while he should cause his wife to get ready for the journey; but while they were eating he sent for his neighbours and told them his hard case, and asked them what he should do. And they one and all cried,—“Down with this tyrant who takes from us our wives and daughters! We will not cease till we have rid ourselves of him!” So they got ready their arms, and they sent away the slaves with an insulting message and a defiance to the king. And they assembled in great numbers, and hasted to where he was; but he heard of their coming, and hid himself in a deep glen, which, from this cause, has ever since been called “the Earl’s Glen.” Some followers were with him, but when night was come he sent them away, all but one slave, whose name was Karker, for it was easier for two than for many to conceal themselves there. And when all was dark and still they crept into a hole and slept. But Karker was troubled with a dream, wherein he saw a man of fierce and threatening aspect, who came to the hole, and said, angrily, “Ulle is dead!” He awoke, and finding it a dream, laid himself down again to sleep; but the dream came once more,

and the fierce man uttered the same words. Then Karker trembled, and woke the king, and told him what he had seen and heard in his vision. Upon which the heart of Earl Hakon sunk within him, for he knew by this that his death was at hand. When morning was come they made their way to the house of Thora of Rimol, a lady much loved by the king, and Earl Hakon sent Karker to her, begging her to come to him secretly. Now, Thora was not one of those who forsake friends in adversity; but she remembered the benefits she had received at the king's hands, and she came to him as he had desired. He begged of her to conceal him for a few days in her house, but she replied, "At my house they will seek you both inside and outside of it, for they know that I am your friend; yet, if you will be guided by me, I can conceal you." So Hakon consented, for he said, "The first thing needful is to save one's life." Then Thora caused a great hole to be dug inside her swine-sty, and concealed the entrance to it with a pile of wood. And into this dismal place Earl Hakon and his slave crept, and were covered up in utter darkness.

By this time came tidings that Olaf, the son of King Tryggve, had come to claim his own, and that

he had slain Erlend, the son of Hakon, and that the bonders were hastening to join his standard. Deep dismay took hold on Hakon when Thora told him what she had heard; but the sound of many voices made her cover up the hole as before. And, scarcely had she done this ere a crowd of armed men entered the farm, and began searching everywhere for Earl Hakon, the king. Both inside and out they searched, and at last they came to the swine-sty, where there was a great stone. Upon this stone Olaf mounted, and made a speech to his followers, who, with loud acclamations, proclaimed him their king. He also offered a great reward to him who should kill the earl—all which was heard by Earl Hakon and Karker, his slave, where they lay concealed.

In the evening King Olaf went away; and Hakon then removed the covering from the hole, for he had need of air. And when night came he lay awake, but Karker slept, and was troubled in his sleep. The earl woke him, and asked him what he was dreaming of. He answered, "I dreamed that Olaf Tryggveson had placed a gold ring round my neck." "Dost thou mean to betray me?" said the earl; "take heed, lest if Olaf catch thee, he may lay a red ring about thy neck."

To this Karker answered not, for he meditated treachery. And they both kept themselves awake, watching one another ; but at length the earl dropped asleep, and he likewise was troubled in his sleep, and drew his heels under him, and raised his neck, and screamed aloud. On this Karker drew his knife and stuck it into the earl's throat, cutting it across, and so killed him. And thus died Hakon, the bad king of Norway—the year of which event was the year of Our Lord 995, so that Hakon had ruled more than eighteen years. After this, Karker cut off Hakon's head, and bore it to Olaf, who, instead of rewarding him, ordered him to be hanged. After that his head was cut off, and, together with the head of Hakon, it was hung upon a gallows at the place of execution near Trondheim ; while the bonders threw stones at the lifeless heads, execrating the names both of Hakon and of Karker.

CHAPTER XIII.

OLAF FINDS HIS MOTHER, BUT LOSES HIS WIFE.

THE hour of Olaf's triumph had arrived : and now we learn that he was unanimously chosen king of Norway by the general assembly of the chiefs and people, called together at Nidaros ; and when the grand ceremony of electing him was over in that city, Olaf went all round the country, and from city to city, and village to village, receiving the homage and obedience of the inhabitants. In those days, many of the great chiefs held their lands from the king of Denmark, who had formerly ruled in Norway, and were bound to follow him in war, because he was their liege lord, as it was called ; but now that Olaf was chosen king by the voice of the people, these chiefs withdrew their allegiance from the king of Denmark, and became vassals to Olaf,—and great was the joy that the rightful heir of Harold the Fair-haired had become king. As for the sons of the unfortunate Hakon, whose names were Eric and Sweyn, they



fled into Sweden with their relations and friends, swearing that they would never rest until they should return and drive Olaf away, a vow which one of them fulfilled.

Olaf journeyed up and down in his dominions for a whole year, and by that time he felt assured that he was firmly established in his kingdom: then he meditated upon the great work which he had set apart for himself to do, namely, to bring all the land to the knowledge of the Christian faith; and he resolved within himself that he would no longer delay it, else might he bring down upon him the wrath of Heaven. And first he remembered the vow which he had made when he landed on Norwegian ground in the isle of Möster; and he caused a church to be built on the spot where he had returned thanks to God for his prosperous voyage. But while he was meditating on his future plans, there happened to him a thing which gave him greater joy than aught that had yet occurred. One day a rich bonder from Viken presented himself before him, and said, "I have news for thee, King Olaf."

And Olaf replied to him, "Say on—who art thou?"

"I am called Lodin," said the stranger; "I

dwell in the province of Viken, and am possessed of land and wealth."

"Two very excellent things," said Olaf.

"I am a merchant, and I make voyages, sometimes for trade, sometimes for war. Be that as it may, it chanced that many years ago, I sailed on a voyage to the eastern shores of the Baltic: having much merchandize to dispose of, and that of a sort which suited the wants and fancies of the people of Esthonia, so methought I would steer thither."

"A very prudent resolve," said Olaf.

"Now it was summer-time, and thou knowest, O king, that in that season of the year, the people of Esthonia are fond of holding their fairs and markets. I say thou knowest, for I am told thou wast once in those parts."

"Thou art right;" said Olaf, "but it is many years since."

"And I am talking of many years since," said Lodin, "when thou wast a youth, King Olaf. I sped my course to the great mart of Esthonia with my wares, and after I had sold them to great advantage, I cast my eyes about to see whether with the profits I could buy anything that pleased me."

"Then thou wert not wholly bent on trade," said Olaf.

"I pray thee, listen patiently to me," said Lodin, "for I am a man of many words."

"That is true," said Olaf, "a man of very many words."

"Nevertheless, thou wilt not wish them unsaid," replied Lodin. "Listen now. In the market-place there were many merchants' goods exposed for sale, and there were likewise many slaves, both male and female. Some were young and some were old, and some were neither one nor the other."

"That is very probable," said Olaf.

"Amongst the latter, I noted well a female of middle age, for her features were known to me, and I gazed at her until I perfectly recalled to memory the when and the where I had seen her before. She also saw that I noticed her intently, and asked me if I remembered her; for, quoth she, if I mistake not, I see before me Lodin Thorkelsson, the rich merchant of Viken, the friend of Tryggve Olafsson."

Here Lodin stopped; but Olaf, whose curiosity was roused, bade him go on.

"I said to her," continued Lodin, "since thou rememberest me so well, it were ill to deny that thou hast guessed aright. And how has it fared

with thee, lady? but I need not have asked the question, for her face was wan and her features wasted: she was meagre and thin, and poorly clad, and she had plainly been acquainted with grief. And she replied, my tale is a sad one: thou hast heard that I was taken by the vikings and sold for a slave—and the master I had was cruel to me, and because I refused to do his bidding, he sold me to one of his friends, who was no better than himself, and thus, what with sorrow for the loss of all that was dear to me, and what with hard toil, scant fare, and light raiment, I grew weak and thin, until at last my second master sent me hither for sale. And now, O Lodin, as thou wast a friend of King Tryggve's, buy me of this hard taskmaster, and take me back with thee to Norway!"

"What didst thou do?" said Olaf.

"I refused to do as she wished—" "Thou wast a churl then," interrupted Olaf.

"Unless she would marry me," continued Lodin, not heeding the interruption.

"That is another thing," said Olaf. "It is," said Lodin.

"She agreed to my offer, for she knew me well. So I sought her master, and paid him the price

he asked for her, and she was set at liberty. Then I married her, and brought her back with me to Norway, and happily have I and the Lady Astrida lived together since that time."

"Astrida!" exclaimed Olaf.

"The widow of King Tryggve, and the mother of King Olaf, whom God long preserve," replied Lodin.

"Where is she?" said Olaf, rising, and embracing Lodin.

"She waits without," said he; and with that he brought her in, and she fell on her son's neck, and wept, and kissed him again and again. And Olaf looked at her, but could not clearly recall to mind her features, for he was but three years old when he was taken from her, and she was now nearly thirty years older. But he asked why she had not informed him that she still lived, and why she had not come forth to meet him when he was in Viken: and she replied that she had been absent with her husband on a journey into Sweden at the time.

Then she told him that she had three children, who were waiting without to see their brother the king; so Olaf caused them to be brought in, and he was pleased to find them tall and well looking.

Their names were Thorkel Nefia, the son, a stout and handsome youth; Ingerida, the eldest daughter, who was married to Thorgeir of Viken a rich bonder; and the youngest, Ingegirda, who was married to Hyrning, also a rich bonder of the same country. And Olaf's sisters, the daughters of King Tryggve and Astrida, whose names were Ingeburga and Astrida, were likewise brought to him—also Astrida's brothers, the sons of old Eric Biodaskalde, whose names were Sigurd Karlshoved, Iostein, and Thorkel Dyduil, who were all rich, and dwelt in Viken. Thus Olaf was surrounded by his relations; and he who had a short time before been an outcast and an adventurer, was now a powerful king with powerful friends. And so the world goes on. Some rise while others fall, and the tides of the sea rise and fall in like manner.

Now where was the wife whom Olaf had left behind him in England, the brave-hearted woman who had chosen the forlorn stranger for her husband, in the midst of the nobles and knights of the land? She was gone where there is no marrying nor giving in marriage; and the tidings of her death reached Olaf in the midst of his triumphs, and he mourned for her long.

CHAPTER XIV.

OLAF, AFTER HIS OWN FASHION, INTRODUCES
CHRISTIANITY.

THE summer was come round again, and it was the second year of Olaf's reign. In the romantic country of Viken was he then sojourning with his relations and friends, those of whom I have told you before. Here he revolved in his own mind how to begin THE GREAT WORK; and he called to his council his mother's brothers, his stepfather Lodin, and his brothers-in-law, Thorgeir and Hyrning, to talk over the matter. And he stood up before them and told them that he was resolved that the Christian faith should be proclaimed all over Norway, "come weal, come wo," and that he would have this done, even if it cost him his life: he also told them that he relied mostly upon them, and that he would make great men of them all if they would aid him to their utmost. These ignorant heathens were easily led by such an offer, and though they "knew little

and cared less" about Jesus of Nazareth, "the God of the Christians," they bound themselves to serve Olaf in all that he desired them to do.

Then Olaf caused it to be proclaimed throughout Viken that his will was that all should become Christians and be baptized, and that the temples of Odin and Thor and the other gods of his ancestors should be shut up. And his stepfather and uncles and brothers-in-law led the way, and were baptized. And when the people saw this they agreed to be baptized also, for Olaf's relations were the richest and most powerful men in that part of Norway. Thus all the southern part of the district of Viken became Christian.

Olaf then assembled a powerful body of followers, and went into the northern part of Viken, where he caused his proclamation to be published anew ; but he met with great opposition, for he had not so many friends in those parts. How be it, he was not one to be daunted by obstacles, so he warned the people there that if they disobeyed his will they must take the consequences, whereat many laughed, and others defied him, but they soon found they had a stern master to deal with, for Olaf caused them to be seized, and he hanged the most obstinate, cut off the hands and ears and

noses of others, and banished the rest, so that in a few months you might travel through Viken and not meet with one who did not call himself a Christian.

As the sword and the gallows had done so much for Christianity in Norway, Olaf resolved to proceed further north, and try their effect there. And the people of Agder submitted to be baptized as the people of Viken had done, because they dared not oppose his will. Next he came to Hordaland, where were many powerful bonders, chief among whom was Olmod the Old, of the race of Horde Kaari. Now when they heard that Olaf was coming to break up their old laws and customs, and to make them follow a new faith, they resolved to arm themselves to resist him. But Olaf's plan, when he entered a new district, was to call an assembly of the chiefs and people, and make known to them his wishes, so as to give those who were so minded an opportunity to ask him questions. Thus did he when he came into Hordaland, and called an assembly at Rogaland, to hear what he had to say about the Christian religion. Then the chiefs of that district held council together, and they chose three of their number, who were the wisest amongst them and the most eloquent,

to hold discourse with the king; but, above all, were they charged to tell him that they would not consent to anything which was opposed to their old laws and faith.

In Rogaland was the assembly held. And when all the chiefs and people were gathered together before him, King Olaf stood up and spoke to them, telling them that he desired nothing so much as their good, both in this world and the next, and that he was come to show them how they might become better and happier than they had been heretofore, and he was going on to say many more things, when the people cried out, "We will not become Christians!" "We will not forsake the gods of our fathers!" and such like. Then Olaf's brow grew stern and dark, and he said, "Take heed to yourselves, for he who refuses to hear and obey me will suffer the death of a traitor. Now it is my will that ye be all baptized, and for this have I brought holy men, priests of the most holy Church with me, that they may instruct you and baptize you."

Then stood up the first of the three who had been chosen to argue with the king, and he said, "Will the king hear me?" And Olaf replied, "Say what thou hast to say." Then the bonder

cleared his throat, and made a great ado as though he were going to make a grand speech, but he was seized with a fit of coughing and suddenly found a difficulty in breathing, so that after essaying twice or thrice to speak, he sat down and said nothing. The second one now stood up and said, "Will the king hear me?" And Olaf replied, "Say what thou hast to say." And having this permission he began to speak, but got so confused and talked so strangely that he was forced to stop, and all present laughed at him. It was now the third one's turn, and he likewise said, "Will the king hear me?" And Olaf smiled and answered, "Say what thou hast to say, but say it better than the other two." Whereupon he also became confused, and grew so hoarse and husky in his throat that no one could hear a word he said; so he sat down, and there was great merriment, and Olaf laughed too, and all fell into the king's views, and he called in the priests who baptized every one of those that were present. But Olmod the Old and his brothers and friends were not present, for they had sent the king word that they had a proposal to make to him, which was to this effect:—"If thou wilt advance our fortunes, we will do as thou desirest and serve

thee with all our might, otherwise we will resist thee to the utmost." And Olaf asked what they desired. Then Olmod the Old said, "Give thy sister, Astrida, in marriage to our kinsman, Erling Shialgson; he is of noble birth, and is the best man in all Norway." Now when Olaf found that this was all that stood between him and the accomplishment of his object, he sent for his sister, Astrida, and told her that Erling, the young bonder of Rogaland, desired her for his wife. But she answered haughtily, "It is of but little use that I am a king's sister, and a king's daughter, if I must marry a man who has no high dignity or office. I will rather wait a few years for a better match." Then Olaf grew angry, and reasoned with the maid, and said, "Am I not the king? and cannot I raise Erling to high dignity? Let not that restrain thee." And Astrida said, "My brother is angry, but I will no longer refuse to do as he wishes."

Then Olaf called Olmod the Old and his followers into his presence, and with them came the young Erling, and the king gave consent to the marriage, on condition that they would become Christians, and do all in their power to promote the true faith. So Erling and Astrida were be-

trothed, and Olmod the Old and all his friends and followers were baptized and became Christians. Thus did Olaf serve the Lord with zeal, if not with discretion: but we must not judge him harshly; he knew not how to convert by the tongue, but he saw and felt that the worship of idols was false and hollow, and that the religion of Jesus was a truth and a reality, and he walked by such light as he had.

The wedding of Erling and Astrida was celebrated with great pomp and festivity. King Olaf was there, and offered to make Erling an earl; but the noble youth refused the offer, saying, "All my relations hitherto have been but bonders, and all I ask is that I may be the greatest of that title." So Olaf gave him all the land north of the Sogn fiord and east of the Lidandisness. And Erling was very wealthy and powerful, and had two hundred free-born men in his house, and as many slaves, and he had a ship with thirty-two banks of oars, in which he took great delight.

CHAPTER XV.

OLAF COURTS SIGRID THE HAUGHTY.

THUS Olaf converted the northern parts of his kingdom, and that same summer he summoned the bonders of the districts of Sogn, Fiord, South Møre, and Raumsdal; and when they met, he offered them the choice of one of these two conditions—either to accept Christianity, or fight. But as the king was attended by a powerful host, the bonders were glad to accept the former condition and be baptized. And he razed the temples to the ground, and brake the images, and despoiled them of their gold and silver, and other ornaments. Amongst other things which he took was a great gold ring which Earl Hakon had caused to be made and hung on the door of the great temple of Thor at Lade.

Olaf had now been three years king in Norway; and he began to think that a king without a queen was like a pot without a lid, or a house without a roof. So he cast around in his mind for a princess,

or some noble lady who would be to him a suitable wife. At this time there lived in the neighbouring kingdom of Sweden, the widowed queen Sigrid. She was the daughter of Skogler Toste, a great warrior of that country, and had been married to King Eric the Victorious, but had been divorced by him after the birth of her son Olaf the Swede. She had many very great estates in Sweden, and was a woman of great beauty and understanding. Many strange tales were told of her, how she got rid of her lovers; but I must tell you how she dealt with Harold Grœuske, king in Westfold in Norway. That prince had been a great friend of her father's, and had lived five years with him and Sigrid in his youth. Many years afterwards, when she was a widow, Harold came into that part of the country where she was, and she sent him an invitation to come and feast with her. He went accordingly, and was hospitably received; and they talked of this thing and that, and lastly they talked of marriage; and Harold proposed that she should marry him, but he was already married, and, though in those days, the kings of Sweden and Norway had many wives, like Solomon of old, yet Sigrid did not like to be put second to his first wife, and she bade him say

no more, for she was angry. So this time he went away, but he still thought of her, and he went back to where she dwelt to see her again. That same evening there came another king from Russia to court Queen Sigrid; his name was Visavald; and Sigrid was very angry, for she disliked them both, and said that she would make these small kings tired of coming to court her. From this saying, she was called Sigrid the Haughty. Then she ordered that the two kings should be lodged in a great old room in an out-building, and supplied with all they required. And there was plenty of strong drink; and Sigrid took care that all the kings' attendants should have plenty of it, so that she made them all drunk, and they all fell fast asleep. Then she ordered the out-building to be set on fire, and so the two kings were burnt to death, they and those that were with them: and those who were outside the house were put to the sword. In this cruel and barbarous manner, Sigrid got rid of her lovers. One would think that after this, no more lovers would have come near her: indeed, had she lived in our times she would have been hung for murder, but in the tenth century she was looked upon as a woman of great spirit, who had cleverly rid herself

of two troublesome suitors. Well, time works wonders! Only to think of this heathen woman being sought in marriage—and that, too, by one of the best and bravest kings of his day, and a Christian to boot! Yet so it was. And this woman, fiend or devil, this Sigrid the Haughty, was the one he chose for his wife.

King Olaf sent messengers to Queen Sigrid to propose marriage to her; and as his fame was well known to her, as likewise his beauty and his accomplishments, she was pleased with the proposal, and declared to his ambassadors that she was ready and willing to marry him. So they came back and reported to Olaf all that she had said. Thereupon the king sent them back to her charged to present to her the great gold ring which he had taken off the door of the temple of Thor at Lade, and which was highly valued by all the people, and to ask her that the marriage should take place in the ensuing spring at Konghelle, a town on the frontier of Norway and Sweden, on the banks of the Gotha river. To this the queen assented, well pleased with the present which Olaf had made to her, and with the prospect of the marriage.

Now the queen had the curiosity which is

natural to her sex, and she was desirous of knowing what was the value of this famous ring. So she sent for her goldsmiths, who were well skilled in all that related to the price of the precious metals, and asked them their opinion. They each took the ring in their hands and weighed it, and when they had done so, they looked at each other and smiled. Then Sigrid asked them why they did so; but they were loth to answer her, and communed apart with each other. Whereupon she grew angry, and commanded them to say what it was they had discovered. Then they said, "the ring is not of gold, but of base metal." So she ordered that it should be broken in pieces, and when that was done it was found to be of copper inside. Greatly enraged was Sigrid when this was told to her, both because she had lost a valuable ring, and because she had been deceived by Olaf. "Thus," said she, "if he deceives me in one way, he may in another." Yet it was not Olaf's fault, for he thought the ring was of solid gold, and so did all the world, and so had Earl Hakon thought, who caused the ring to be made and fastened on the door of the temple as an offering to Thor: and Olaf was as much vexed as Sigrid, and he sent again to soften her anger, and

so it was finally settled that the marriage should take place in the spring. During the winter, Olaf went to other parts of his kingdom, causing the heathen temples to be closed, and the idols to be broken, and the people to be baptized, and churches to be built. Great was his zeal: it was a pity that his prudence was not equally great, for the former is of little avail without the latter, — nay, is sometimes a very serious evil. Had he reflected more, he would have talked to Sigrid about her conversion to Christianity before, instead of after, agreeing to marry her. And this might have saved him his throne.

When the spring came, King Olaf went, gaily attended, to Konghelle to keep his tryst with Queen Sigrid. The lady came also, accompanied by her friends, and was all smiles and joy, for rumour spoke well of Olaf's beauty, and she was not disappointed when she beheld him. I know not if so pure and holy a passion as love, which is in its essence not of this earth but from the Lord, could dwell in so fierce a heart as hers; a woman who could cause her lovers to be burnt to death merely because they came too often to see her! but she felt very differently towards Olaf from what she had done towards her other suitors, and

she was eager to conclude the marriage. But Olaf said that she must first be baptized, and renounce the religion (he called it *superstition*) of her ancestors. Then all the pride of her nature rose up, and she said, "I must not part from the faith which I and my forefathers have held; but let us not quarrel about that. I will worship my gods, and you can worship yours." Whereat King Olaf was enraged, and words grew high between them, and he struck her in the face with his glove, saying, "Why should I marry an old heathen jade?" Therewith he rose up and left her; but as he went out from her presence, she raised her hand and her voice menacingly, and said, "King Olaf, thy conduct to me this day will cost thee thy crown." And so it did, as we shall see in the sequel. He returned to Norway, and she to Sweden.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SKERRY OF SHRIEKS.

THERE were warlocks and witches in those days, at least so the people believed, and no one more so than King Olaf. A story is told of what befel a warlock (or male witch, or wizard) who had been sent by Harold Gormeson, King of Denmark, to Iceland, that remote and inhospitable isle, to find out what the people there were saying and doing ; for the men of Iceland had made scorn of King Harold Gormeson, and had passed a law that as many lampoons should be made against him as there were headlands in his country. So the warlock did the bidding of the king, and hied thither in the shape of a whale, and when he came near to the land, he went to the western side of it, and there he saw mountains covered with serpents of all shapes and hues ; and he was afraid to land ; so he swam about a long while until he came to Vapnafiord, and there he made for the shore,—when lo ! a huge dragon came rushing

towards him, followed by a train of serpents and toads, all blowing poison towards him; and the air became infected so that he grew sick and swam away. Then he turned and went westward as far as Eyafjord, and tried to land there; but there he was encountered by an enormous bird, whose wings stretched out far and wide over the mountains on each side, which so affrighted this warlock that he fled in dismay to try his fortune in another part of the island. At length he came to Breidafjord, where he again essayed to land; but this time he took the form of man, as being more convenient to walk with than that of a whale. And, besides, warlock as he was, he was afraid of the birds and serpents of this wonderful country. But no sooner had he set foot on shore, than a vast grey bull made his appearance and ran against him, bellowing hideously, so that the warlock fled again to the waves for safety. Finally, he landed at a place called Vikarsted, between two very high mountains, and seeing nobody there, he began to rejoice that he should now see the country and do the king's bidding; but while he was thus communing with himself, he looked up, and beheld, afar off, an enormous giant striding over hill and dale towards him with

an iron staff in his hands, which was three times longer than the tallest pine. Here then was a foe with whom he could not cope. Then he said to himself, "Truly, this is a wonderful island; but it is no place for King Harold Gormeson, for the whole power of Jubinal himself protects it." And when the warlock returned to Denmark this was what he told to the king, and the king believed it! And I have told the story to show how ignorant even kings were in those days, to believe that any man could take the shape of a whale, and see the things this warlock professed to have seen.

Now King Olaf, with all his knowledge, was no wiser than King Harold Gormeson, and he firmly believed that there were such beings as wizards and witches; for doth not Moses, the great law-giver of the Jews, say,—“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live?” And if there had been no witches, why should he have said it? Moreover, Olaf had read the denouncements of God’s wrath against those who should hold converse with wizards and those having familiar spirits. And as he was a Christian king, he resolved to exterminate them out of the land. Therefore he proceeded to Viken and summoned a Thing (or assembly of the

people), whereat he made a speech, and declared it to be his will that all men of whom it should be known to a certainty that they dealt with evil spirits, or in witchcraft, or were sorcerers, should be banished from Norway, and if they would not go, then that they should be put to death. So great search was made everywhere for them, and many were brought before the king, who ordered some to be burnt and others to be banished, but those who turned Christians and suffered themselves to be baptized, he forgave. But there was one man brought before him, who was the greatest sorcerer in those parts, and who could perform many very wonderful tricks of witchcraft; and he was called Eyvind Kellda: he was a great-grandson of Harold the Fair-haired, and was thus as nearly related to that good king as Olaf himself. When Eyvind was taken, many of his attendants, who were also sorcerers, were taken along with him, and brought before the king; and the king caused a great feast to be got ready for them, and asked them to perform some of their tricks before him: this they did, and he rewarded them with abundance of strong drink; and when they had made merry amongst themselves, they drank until they were all drunk; for drink will take hold on

wizards as well as on common men. And when they were drunk, they all fell asleep; and the king caused them to be bound and carried into a house wherein was nobody. There they were laid, and the house was fastened up and set on fire, and the wizards were all burnt excepting Eyvind, who was awake by the flames, which severed the bands that bound him: then mounting to the roof, he escaped through the smoke-hole, and let himself down on the outside. Thus Eyvind escaped this time; and so proud was he of his power that he caused word to be sent to King Olaf, that he would carry on his arts of witchcraft, the same as heretofore, notwithstanding the king. And when this message came to King Olaf he was sorely displeased, and vowed that Eyvind should die. Nevertheless, Eyvind did not remain in that part, but went northward with his warlocks.

Now when spring was come, Olaf went northward also, and came to Augvaldsness, where he remained awhile to feast. And one night, when the king had retired to his chamber, there suddenly appeared before him a venerable and majestic man, whose countenance was beautiful and friendly, and he sat on the foot of the king's bed, and spoke to him in rhymed verses. The

king felt as though it were enchantment ; and the burden of the old man's rhymes was the hard fate of the sorcerers and wizards, for he said, " When I led my people out of Asaland into this country, I practised magic arts, and overcame my enemies ; and I and my sons founded the throne on which thou sittest this day, O king. Have, then, compassion on the wizards and on Eyvind Kellda, for he serves me well, and will eat horse-flesh at my great feast this spring ; I invite thee to do the same." Then Olaf knew he was talking with Odin, the being whom his forefathers had so long worshipped ; but he feared not. In sooth, Olaf was as brave as Odin himself ; and he answered, " I have sworn that Eyvind Kellda shall die, and by the aid of the God of the Christians I will keep my oath : neither will I eat horse-flesh at thy sacrifices, but will hew down thine altar and thine image." Then the face of Odin grew terrible to behold, but Olaf gazed at it undauntedly, and soon the figure vanished. And thus will all evil disappear if we look it steadily in the face, as Olaf looked at Odin, and call on the Christian's God for aid.

But a great triumph awaited Olaf. For the next morning, Eyvind Kellda and his crew landed

from their ship at Augvaldsness, and began to play pranks of witchcraft, in order to annoy the king; and Eyvind clothed his men with caps of darkness, and spread so thick a mist around that they could not be seen. In this guise they approached the house wherein the king abode. But lo! when they reached it, there came clear day, so that the king's guards discovered them, and pursued them. Eyvind and his men fled round the island; but at length they were overtaken and seized and brought before the king. Olaf at once knew Eyvind, and asked him where he had been, and why he was there. Then Eyvind told all that had happened, and again defied the king, for he still relied upon his arts of witchcraft to escape from his enemies. Poor, blinded, ignorant heathen! He was soon taught better, for Olaf commanded his guards to take Eyvind and all his crew to a skerry, or small ledge of rocks, which was above water when the tide was low, but many feet under water when the tide was high. To this rock they were all bound, and as the tide rose they shrieked with fear, and they shrieked until the waters covered them and they were drowned, whence the place is called to this day "The Skerry of Shrieks." Thus did Olaf deal with the warlocks.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE THING AT MEERE.

IN the summer King Olaf collected a great army, and sailed with it north to Nidaros, in the Trondheim country. From thence he sent a summons, calling together all the bonders of the different districts of that country. But the bonders knew that the king's purpose was to force them to become Christians; and therefore they armed all their people, and came a great host to the Thing (or meeting). When Olaf saw this, he was alarmed, for he could not resist so great a war force; however, he invited them all to be seated, and spoke to them pleasantly, saying he wished them all to become Christians. But when he had uttered these words they rose up, and called upon him to be silent, threatening to drive him away, as they had driven away Hakon the Good, when he came to them on the same errand. Olaf, therefore, seeing that they would not hear him, pretended to give way to them, and said, "I wish only to be in good understanding with you, as of

old, and I will come to where you hold your greatest sacrifice festival, and see your customs, and thereafter we shall consider which to hold by." In this the king did wisely, for he averted the hostility of the bonders, and appeased their anger. And as his manner was friendly, and his air frank, they were all well pleased with him, and invited him to meet them at the great sacrifice which was to be offered up to the god Thor, at the ancient temple of Meere, on Midsummer's day. The king accepted the invitation, and all passed off peaceably.

But Olaf had firmly resolved that he would put a stop to the worship of Thor, and encounter the idolaters with the sword, if need should be, like Joshua of old, and he took measures accordingly. He began by collecting all his ships in the river Nid, so that he had a great force with him; then he caused a great feast to be prepared at Lade, and invited the chiefs and great bonders of that and the neighbouring districts to it. When the feast was ready, and the chiefs assembled, the king caused the health-cup to be sent round, and they all drank freely, and great was their merriment, and when night came they retired and slept in peace. But the next morning, when the king

was dressed, he caused the priests to celebrate the early mass before him, and asked for the blessing of Heaven on what he was about to do ; then he ordered the trumpets to be sounded for a meeting of all his guests,—this was also the signal for his men to leave their ships and come to him. So when the Thing, or meeting, was assembled, the bonders found themselves surrounded by armed men, and looked uneasily at one another. Then the king made them sit down, and he rose and spoke to them thus : “ I invited the men of Trondheim to a Thing, and to allow themselves to be baptized ; but they, on the other hand, invited me to offer sacrifice to their gods, as King Hakon the Good had done ; thereupon it was agreed between us that we should meet at Meere, and there make a great sacrifice. Now if I, along with you, shall turn again to making sacrifice, then will I make the *greatest* of sacrifices that are in use, and I will sacrifice *men*. But I will not sacrifice slaves or malefactors for this purpose, for that will be a dishonour to your gods ; but I will take the greatest men I can find, for they will be a worthy sacrifice, such as should only be offered to Odin and Thor, and for this I select from amongst you those who have most power and wealth.” Then he named twelve amongst

those present, saying that this was the number of the Drottnars of Odin in Asaland, who were to be honoured likewise. All these, he said, he would offer in sacrifice to the gods for peace and a fruitful season. He then caused the chiefs whom he had named to be seized and bound; but they, when they found themselves thus situated, thought it prudent to submit to the king's terms: accordingly they were all baptized, and bound by oath to maintain and hold steadfast the Christian faith, and renounce sacrifices to their gods. After this, they were kept prisoners until they sent for their sons, or other near relatives, to become hostages for them. Thus Olaf subdued a portion of his opponents.

The appointed time now drew nigh for the great Thing at Meere; accordingly, Olaf collected all his forces, and went into the country of Trondheim. Great was the multitude which assembled; for, besides King Olaf and his men, all the chief bonders from far and near, with their retainers, and most of the inferior bonders with theirs, were present. The greater part of them were enemies of the Christians, and had come prepared to fight for the supremacy of their own gods. Foremost amongst them was the bonder of Ophang, in the district of Yriar, a wealthy and powerful man, who

was known far and wide by the name of Iern Skieegge, or Iron Beard, and by common consent had been chosen leader and spokesman of their party.

King Olaf entered the assembly, and took his seat on a raised dais. He was attended by his friends and his guards, all well armed, and he carried in his hand a heavy battle-axe, the handle whereof was inlaid with gold. The meeting was held in the open air, in front of the great temple of Thor. The chiefs were seated on the ground in the inner circle; while outside of them, at some little distance behind, were seated their retainers and thralls, or slaves. The king opened the business of the meeting by a speech, wherein he told them all that he had done for their good, and how he had been invited to assist at the great sacrifice to Thor, but that his will was that no more sacrifices should be offered to the gods, and that every one present should become Christian. Then Iern Skieegge stood up, and said that the will of the bonders was that the king should not break their laws, but that he should offer sacrifice as the other kings had done before him; that they would not have the God of the Christians for their God, but would remain faithful to the gods of their



ancestors. On this the bonders set up a great shout, which was taken up by their thralls, and which rang over mountain and plain, and must have been heard by Odin himself in Valhalla (if there be such a place). Albeit, King Olaf was in nowise daunted, but said he would go into their temple, and see what their sacrifices were. So all parties went into the temple; but the king had privily warned his men who remained outside to set upon Iern Skieegge as he was entering, and he took a few of his bravest men with him into the temple. It was a large building, in the form of a circle, and round it were images of the gods, with ornaments of gold and silver hung round their necks and arms. And there were the famous idols which represented the ancient heroes of Asaland and Scandinavia,—Odin and his sons, Thor the hammerer, Balder the beautiful, and Niord and Frey, and Heimdal and Skiold, and Freya the priestess, the daughter of Niord. But far more gorgeous than them all was the image of Thor, which held in its hand the ponderous hammer wherewith he smote the giant Utgaard Loke. This image was covered with ornaments of gold and silver, and before it was an altar, on which the sacrifices were to be offered. And the

sacrificers were there, with their victims, the bull and the horse, and the vessels for receiving the blood, which was to be sprinkled on door-post, floor, and people. All this the king gazed on for a few minutes, while they were preparing the sacrifice, then boldly advancing to the image of Thor, he raised his battle-axe and struck it down, and it rolled over from its seat and fell on the ground; and the king's men completed the work he had begun, and threw down all the images from their seats, while the bonders who were in the temple drew their swords and prepared for battle. But while they stood hesitating, a loud shout from without gave notice that the battle had begun there, and soon were heard the clash of the sword and the crashing of the battle-axe, and the shout, and the curse, and the shriek, and the groan, and all the horrors that attend the deadly struggles of men; and foremost amongst those who fell was Iern Skieegge, who died vainly imploring the aid of the false gods of his forefathers. Olaf struck right and left with his heavy axe, and smote the idolaters within the temple, which was soon cleared of all its living tenants, the broken idols and the dead bodies of their worshippers soon being all that was left in it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OLAF'S THIRD WIFE.

WHEN the king had made an end of breaking the idols, and slaying their priests and worshippers in the temple of Thor, he came forth out of it to finish the battle with those who had remained outside; but the bonders grew faint-hearted when they saw their leader Iern Skiegge fall, for they had no confidence in each other, and there was none like him to stand up for their rights with iron heart and hand, as he had done. So they stayed their hands from striking, and signified to King Olaf that they would make terms with him, and desired to know what his will was. Olaf answered them that he would give them their choice of two things—one was to embrace Christianity forthwith, giving him hostages for their remaining true to it, or else to continue the fight until he or they were destroyed. Thereupon they made submission to him, and consented to be baptized, they and all their retainers and thralls

that were with them, and bound themselves by oath to be steadfast Christians, and to obey the king in all things. I wonder what idea these ignorant warriors had of their new religion, and of the obligations it imposed upon them! They probably thought that they had only transferred their faith from one set of heroes, like Odin and Thor, to another set who were named Jesus of Nazareth, Paul and John; for we are not told that Olaf took much pains to have them taught their new religion: he thought he was doing a great work in forcing them to profess it with their lips. In truth, he cleared the country of idols, which was a great step towards the spread of a better faith.

When they had all been baptized, he granted to the relatives of Iern Skieegge the privilege of carrying away his body to bury it; and they took it to Yriar, and buried it in a mound on Osteraad. To this day this mound is called the Skieegge mound. But this was not all; for, by the laws of Norway, it was enacted that whenever a free man was slain in a tumult his slayers were bound to pay to his relations a compensation, or penalty, for the bloodshed. Now a great dispute arose here, as to who was the true slayer of Iern Skieegge; for his kinsmen contended that he had been killed

by the king's orders, and that therefore the king was the murderer. Olaf replied that he had no design of killing Iern Skieegge, but that all that he meant was to force him to become a Christian, and that his men had exceeded his orders in falling upon him as they had done. But the kinsmen of the fallen chief were bold and ambitious men, and had other designs besides obtaining mere money compensation for his death; they knew their power in their own district, and that they could give the king much trouble, and they thought they could make a better bargain with him. Now Iern Skieegge had left a daughter, whose name was Gudrun, a handsome and high-spirited girl, and as Olaf was a widower, they said among themselves, "Let the king take Gudrun for his wife, then he will perforce take us into his service, and his councils, and we shall become great men in Norway." So they made this proposal to the king, and it pleased him, for he had heard of her beauty; but he made it a condition that she should become a Christian, and that he should first see her. To both of these conditions they made no objection; but when Gudrun was informed of them she bit her lips, and said nothing; for she was of a haughty temper, and loved

not being sold to the enemy of her father. Howbeit she was prevailed upon to give her consent at last, and she was brought into his presence, and the king was well pleased with her beauty and wit; and she strove to please him, for she had conceived a purpose of her own, which she told not to mortal ear. So the day was fixed for the wedding, and king Olaf invited his friends from far and near to be present at the ceremony, which was to commence with the baptism of the lady.

The morning came which was to give to Olaf his third wife, and the town of Nidaros was gaily decorated. All the king's ships were in the fiord, and his soldiers and friends were around him, for he feared treachery, and a surprise from the kinsmen of Iern Skieegge. They, too, were there, with their retainers in great numbers; but for greater safety they pitched their tents outside the town. You may form, from this, some idea of the state of society at this period in Norway; when it was no uncommon thing for chiefs, and even kings, to be burnt alive in their houses by their enemies, as we have seen was the fate of poor king Harold Greenske.

While Olaf was sitting alone in his chamber, musing on this new event in his life, one of his

servants desired to speak with him. The king bade him say on.

“King Olaf,” said the man, “forgive the boldness of thy servant, and condemn him not until thou seest whether he has told thee aright or not. I have become acquainted with one of the maids of the lady Gudrun, who sleeps in the same tent with her; she tells me that for many nights Gudrun has been restless in her sleep, as though some evil weighed upon her mind. Visions has she, and mutters strange things; at last Thyрни bethought her of listening attentively to her mutterings, and from them she fears lest Gudrun meditates a grievous wrong to thee, King Olaf. She carries a dagger in her bosom, which ever and anon she clutches, and whispers of avenging her father’s death. This did Thyрни bid me tell thee, King Olaf.”

“I mistrust the damsel myself,” said Olaf; “I will give heed to thy warning, and thank thee and Thyрни.”

Then the king attired himself for the wedding, and caused the trumpets to sound for the people to assemble in the gardens of his palace. Thither hasted the chiefs and their followers, and all the soldiers and people, and all took their stations.

Then came the Christian priests and their attendants, bearing a font, with consecrated water therein; and lastly, came the king, leading the fair Gudrun, greeted with loud shouts of welcome from the bystanders. Olaf led his bride to the holy font, and there she made profession of her faith in Christ, and the priest poured the water on her, baptizing her into the church. This done, the marriage ceremony was performed, and Gudrun became the wife of Olaf.

Then a great feast was prepared, and the chiefs amused the spectators by various feats of dexterity, while the scalds sang the heroic deeds of Olaf, and the feats of his ancestors. The day passed in merry-making and revelry, and the wassail bowl passed freely round till night drew on. The revellers prolonged their noisy revels until they could no longer hold the cup, as was the custom of those days, and many passed the night on the ground where they had passed the day. At last all was still and dark, king Olaf and his bride retired to their nuptial chamber, and the day closed on a scene of general contentment. The night was to reveal a different one; for shortly before the dawn a commotion was heard in the palace, the king was calling for lights and for his men, there was arming in haste, and the alarm

soon spread : it was believed that Iern Skieegge's men had set upon the king in the dead hour of night, and sought to slay him. Soon lights were had, and the palace was searched in every nook and corner, but the vanished bride was nowhere to be found ; they searched the gardens and the neighbourhood, but no Gudrun was there. On the other side of the landscape the tents of the men of Trondheim shone white in the broad moonlight ; but amongst them unusual bustle was also seen : one by one the tents were struck, until they had all disappeared, and with them the warriors of Iern Skieegge. What was the cause of all this stir ? When Gudrun thought the king had fallen asleep, she slyly drew forth from under the cover of the bed a knife, which she intended should find its way to his heart ; but noiseless as were her movements, they did not escape Olaf, who only feigned sleep, for he had not forgotten the warning of Thyрни. There was moonlight enough to show him what she was doing ; before she could strike he seized her arm, and took the knife from her, then summoned his attendants. Gudrun seized her clothes, and making her escape from the palace, fled to her father's men, who struck their tents, and departed home with her.

CHAPTER XIX.

HAREK OF THIOTTÖ.

KING Olaf was well pleased to be rid of so wicked a wife, and ordered that she should not be pursued: thus she and her company returned unmolested to their homes, but Iern Skiegge's relatives were disappointed in their ambitious schemes with regard to Olaf. The king was more than ever zealous in spreading Christianity, and was not very scrupulous about the means he used to make converts; but I doubt if he did more than force them to profess the new religion with their lips: as for being baptized, that was no novelty, for by the religion of Odin, it was ordained that water should be poured over infants when they were named, so the ignorant people of Norway could not perceive much difference between the Christian and the heathen ceremony. But the story of Harek of Thiottö is a good example of the king's way of making converts to Christianity.

Harek of Thiottö was a wealthy merchant of

Halogaland, but an enemy to the Christians ; and he and all his people were strongly attached to the faith of their forefathers, the worship of Odin. Amongst his followers were two friends, called Sigurd and Hauk, who sailed with him in his voyages, and had visited many countries. One summer, while Olaf was king, they made a voyage to England to sell their merchandize, and having finished their business they returned to Norway, sailing along the coast on their way to Halogaland. When they came to North Møre they fell in with some of King Olaf's people, with whom they got into conversation, and disclosed who they were, and what was their business, and also that they were heathens. Then Olaf's men came to him, and told him what persons these were, that they had met with, and he straightway gave orders that they should be arrested and brought before him ; which, when it was done, he spoke kindly to them, and asked them if they would be baptized ; but they replied that they would not. Again the king spoke to them and tried by all the means in his power to persuade them to give up the religion of their ancestors, but it was in vain ; they steadily refused to comply with his request. And when he found he failed to make

an impression on them by mild means, he had recourse to threats, and told them he would have them tortured and put to death if they remained obstinate; but they gloried in their faith, and defied the king. Then he ordered them to be cast into prison and loaded with chains, until he should give further orders concerning them. He would frequently visit them in their prison, and talk with them about their religion, and how much better it would be for them to turn Christians—and as he always spoke kindly they at length began to listen to him—and asked him many questions about the new religion, and what they should do to become disciples. Now in their discourse they frequently spoke of Harek of Thiotttö, their friend and master, saying what a good man he was, how kind, how hospitable, how charitable to the poor and the afflicted; and Olaf thought it was the more pity that so good a man should be lost to the church. And he asked them whether, if he would set them at liberty, they would go to Harek and bring him to the king's place at Nidaros. But they said that could only be done by stratagem; yet they would do their best to bring him to the king if they were set at liberty. Then Olaf made them promise to return,

and he caused their irons to be taken off, and their ship to be restored to them, and they sailed away to Halogaland.

Harek welcomed them back, and invited them to stay with him in his house; so they remained with him a long time. Now it happened one day that Harek was sad, and weary of doing nothing; and his friends, Sigurd and Hauk, proposed that he should go in a boat with them and row for a little amusement—but they thought this a favourable moment for trying to carry him off. Harek was well pleased at the thought, for he was fond of the sea, as all the Norsemen of old were, and he willingly assented. So they went down to the sea, and there they took a skiff, which was fitted with oars, but had also a mast and rigging. Harek busied himself with fitting on the rudder, while the others put chests of bread and butter, and a great keg of ale on board. They also provided themselves with arms, which was a usual thing to do in those unsettled times, and then they got into the boat and rowed away from the land. After a while they hoisted the sail, and Harek was steering; but Sigurd and Hauk went up to him, and, drawing their weapons, said, "Thou must choose one of these conditions:—either let

us direct this voyage, or else be thou fast bound and let us take the command, or else submit to death." When Harek recovered from his surprise, he saw that he could not contend with them, so he bound himself by oath to resign the command into their hands; whereupon they steered the boat to the south, and sailed along the coast until they reached Nidaros, where they landed and found the king. They took Harek with them and brought him before Olaf, who had a long discourse with him, and asked him to be baptized. Upon this Harek begged for time to consider: this the king very willingly granted; and he had many a conference with him both in public and in private—yet could he not overcome the objections of Harek. But the king was pleased with his manly bearing, and gave him his liberty, telling him that it was by his orders that Sigurd and Hauk had acted as they had done in taking him prisoner. He also told Harek that he should come to Halogaland, and punish all those who rejected Christianity; and at parting he gave him a handsome boat, well manned, and stored with provisions: in this vessel Harek returned to his own country, right glad to have escaped so easily. But when he got home, he sent for his friend, Eyvind Kinnrif,

who had the reputation of being a wizard, and told him all that had happened, and how King Olaf was coming to Halogaland with a great force to make them all Christians. At this, Eyvind was sorely troubled, for he knew that the king would not suffer any one who had the reputation of being a sorcerer to live, and he busied his brain in devising a plan to escape the vengeance of the king. But while he was talking with Harek, King Olaf's men, who had secretly followed Harek to his house, came up and fell upon Eyvind, and carried him away to their ship, and sailed away with him to Nidaros to King Olaf. Then Eyvind was brought before Olaf, who knew him by repute, and at once ordered him to submit to be baptized. But Eyvind steadfastly refused. Then the king with many gentle words, and the bishop also, strove to persuade him to renounce his great wickedness, and forsake his evil ways, and turn to Christ—but he was obstinate. Lastly, the king threatened him with tortures and death, but still he continued obstinate. Then Olaf ordered him to be laid on the ground, and a pan of glowing coals to be placed on his belly: soon the fire began to destroy Eyvind's body—and he cried out, "Take away the pan, for I would speak before I die." And

Olaf ordered the coals to be removed, and then asked Eyvind if he would believe in Christ. But Eyvind answered, "There can no baptism come upon me, for I am an evil spirit put into this body by sorcery, at the instance of my father and mother, because they had no child—and thus they obtained me!" Thus died this poor, impenitent wretch, in full belief of the power of witchcraft; and the king ordered his body to be burnt, and the ashes to be scattered to the winds.

Then Olaf sailed to Thiottö with a great force, so that none durst oppose him. And he came to Harek's house, and remained there as a guest; and Sigurd and Hauk came with him also, for they had been baptized, and were now of the king's household. But Harek dared no longer oppose the king's will; so he and all his people were baptized—and in this manner all the country through which Olaf passed was made Christian.

CHAPTER XX.

RAUD THE STRONG.

BUT Olaf was not always so successful nor so merciful, as is shown in the case of Raud the Strong, a very rich bonder, who dwelt in the isle of Godö, which was a small island in the terrible fiord of Salten. This fiord is large within, but the entrance to it is very narrow, so that whether the tide flow in or out, there is always a very dangerous race out in the sea from the entrance. And it can only be crossed during the time between ebb and flood tide. Raud was a great idolater, and skilled in witchcraft and sorcery; he was served by a number of small Laplanders and had a vast number of followers. He was also a great sailor, and had a very large ship with a gilded head formed like a dragon, and it had thirty benches for rowers. Now when Raud the Strong heard that Olaf was coming to Halogaland, he sent for Thorer Hiort, his friend, who also had a large ship and many retainers, and took counsel

with him, and they both resolved to gather together an army and fight the king. So they assembled all their men and their ships, and sailed southwards against Olaf, and when they met him they gave him battle. It was a terrible fight, and many were killed on both sides, but Raud lost most men, and his ships were cleared, so that great fear fell upon his followers, and they turned and fled. Those who got on shore were pursued and taken, and Olaf gave life and freedom to all those who asked it and agreed to become Christian: but Thorer Hiort was slain. Raud escaped and reached the Salten fiord; and as he had always a fair wind with him, which people said came from his witchcraft, he reached Godö island in safety. King Olaf sailed along the coast until he came to the fiord; and he made ready to enter it to search for Raud, when a dreadful tempest arose, and continued for a whole week in the fiord, although outside at sea there was beautiful calm weather. So after waiting a week, vainly trying to enter the fiord, Olaf sailed north to the far Lefodden islands, where many became Christians at his bidding. After a while he turned south and came again to Salten fiord, and there the same storm was raging, and the sea

ran high so that no ship could enter; so Olaf waited several days in hopes the weather would moderate in the fiord, although it was calm outside: and he was filled with amazement at the sight.

At length his patience began to wane, and his curiosity to increase, and he applied to Bishop Sigurd, and asked him if he could explain the meaning of the storm in the fiord. And the bishop replied that he would try if God would give him power to conquer these arts of the devil. Then he took all his robes, and went forward to the bow of the king's ship, and ordered tapers to be lighted, and incense to be brought; and he set the crucifix upon the stern of the vessel, and read out of the gospel, and caused mass to be sung, and holy water to be sprinkled over the ship. When this was done, he directed the rowers to row straight into the fiord, and the king ordered the other ships to follow. To the surprise of all, the water was smooth where the ships moved, but curled up in huge waves at a little distance from them: thus one ship followed another in the smooth track, and thus they proceeded a whole day and night until they reached Godö's isle. There they found Raud's great ship, named "The

Dragon"—which was then a common name for large ships of war: it was moored close to the land, and Raud lived in it, for he could live more safely in it than he could on the land. It was so early in the morning when Olaf arrived with his ships, that Raud was still sleeping; so the king ordered an immediate attack, and his men rushed on board and broke into the cabin where Raud was, and seized and bound him. Raud's men attempted to resist, but they were soon overcome, and some were slain, some jumped overboard, and the rest were made prisoners. The king followed up his attack and went on shore, where he took the rest of Raud's people, killing those who resisted, and binding those that submitted. Then when all was done, he ordered Raud to be brought before him, and said to him, "I come rather as thy friend than thy enemy, nor will I injure thee nor take thy property from thee, if thou wilt become a Christian." But Raud made light of the king's offer, and said, "How should I be the better for becoming a Christian? Is not Odin as powerful as Jesus? Will the latter reward me with more gifts than the former? Nay—but I will never believe in Him, and I despise Him." Then the king was wroth, and said, "Thou blas-

phemest, and art worthy to die the worst of deaths; and thou shalt assuredly die so, if thou dost not repent." But Raud again made scoff of Olaf and the Christian's God, so Olaf ordered him to be bound to a heavy beam of wood, which was laid on the ground, and he was tied to it with his face uppermost, and the king caused a wedge to be placed in Raud's mouth to force it open; for Raud had clenched his teeth firmly to bear whatever pain Olaf was going to inflict on him. By this means his teeth were forced apart, and the king ordered an adder to be put into Raud's mouth; but the creature would not enter when Raud breathed on it: then Olaf, finding this would not frighten Raud into compliance, called for a hollow tube, and into that he made the adder go, by holding a red-hot iron before the opening. So the serpent crept into Raud's mouth and down his throat, and gnawed its way out of his side; and in this cruel way Raud was put to death. What shall we say of a king, who called himself a Christian, and yet did not hesitate to use such barbarous methods of making converts, and of punishing those who refused to be converted? Yet these were the means which were resorted to for spreading Christianity throughout Europe

during "the middle ages", (as the thousand years which passed between the fall of the great Roman Empire, in the fifth century after Christ, and the stirring times of the fifteenth century, are called). Olaf made a good thing of his enterprise, for he gained Raud's large ship, and carried off a great quantity of gold and silver, and other valuable things; and he baptized all the people of the fiord and the neighbouring isles. So he enriched himself while he spread Christianity.

On his return to Nidaros he fell in with a fleet of merchant ships from Iceland, and he inquired whether there were any Christians on board; for he had some time before that sent a Saxon priest, named Thangbrand, to that country to convert the people, and he was anxious for tidings of him. But the men of the Iceland ships were heathens, and tried to make their escape: howbeit, the wind was against them, and they were forced to go with the king to Nidaros, where they were well treated, but not suffered to leave the place. One fine day they were swimming for amusement, and the bystanders looked on; and there was a man who challenged any one of the Iceland men to swim against him. This challenge was accepted by one Kiartan Olafsson, who cast off his clothes and

sprang into the water; then he set after the man, seized hold of his foot and dived with him under water. They soon came up, and, without speaking a word, dived down again, and remained under water much longer than the first time. Then they came up again, and, without saying a word, dived down a third time, and remained under water until Kiartan began to tire, and wished to come up, but the man held him down until he was almost drowned, after which the man let him go, and they swam to land. Then Kiartan said, "I am the best swimmer in Iceland, and my name is Kiartan Olafsson—but thou art more expert, and what is thy name?" And the man answered, "I am Olaf Tryggveson, king of Norway." Whereat the Iclander was alarmed, but the king gave him a cloak, and invited him and his people to come to church and hear mass; and after some hesitation, they did so, and were much pleased with the fine singing and the sound of the bells; and when they came back to their ships they talked it over, and admired Olaf's bravery, and his kindness to them, and resolved to become Christians. So Olaf welcomed them, and they were baptized amidst great rejoicings.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LONG SERPENT.

I MUST now tell you of the wonderful ship which Olaf built for himself, which was larger than any ship ever before built in Norway. In those days the largest vessels were not so big as a small frigate is now-a-days. What would Olaf, and those who lived when he did, say to the great steam-ships of our time, could they now come to life and behold them? I think they would find that the language they then spoke contained no words to express the feelings they would experience.

Olaf was very fond of the fiord of Trondheim, and may be called the founder of the town of that name. He was constantly at Nidaros, where indeed he lived, and it was at Ladehammer, a point of land near Trondheim, that he caused his great ship to be built. It was nearly one hundred and thirty feet in length. A great number of workmen were set to work on it: there were men to

fell the timber, and men to shape it, men to carry it and men to fix it; then there were others to make nails, and bolts, and screws; others again made the canvass and the cordage, and there were carpenters and riggers, to put all together, and the master builder was Thorberg Skafting. First, the cradle and beam knees were laid, and the keelson fixed, then the ribs were bent and fixed, and the planking of the sides was begun; and while the men were at work upon this planking, it happened that Thorberg was obliged to go home to his farm on some urgent business, and as he remained a long time, the ship was planked up on both sides by the time he came back. The king was rejoiced at his return, and went with him to see how the vessel looked, and they were both delighted with her noble appearance. Everybody said that so beautiful a ship had never been built before; so Olaf and Thorberg returned to the town well satisfied.

Early the next morning the king returned to the ship, to watch the progress of the workmen, as was his wont, for he took much delight in ships and shipbuilding. And Thorberg went with him; but when they arrived at Ladehammer they were amazed to find all the carpenters standing idle

with their arms across. Olaf asked what the matter was, whereupon they answered that the ship was destroyed, for that somebody had gone from stem to stern, and cut one deep notch after another, all down one side of the planking. Then Olaf drew near and examined the planking, and found that it was as they said, and he became exceeding angry, and said with an oath that if he could discover the man who had been so envious and wicked as to destroy the ship in this manner, he would put him to death. Moreover, he offered a great reward for the discovery of the offender; and he might have offered ten times the amount without ever discovering who had disfigured his ship, but that the offender himself stepped forward and said, "I can tell thee, O king, who has done this. I did it *myself*." Then the king said, "If thou restore not the ship to the same condition wherein it was before these notches were cut, thy life shall pay the forfeit. Thorberg (for it was he) replied that he was willing it should be so, and he took an axe and chipped the planks until all the deep notches were made even with the rest; and when this was done the king and all that were present agreed that the ship was much handsomer on the side of the hull which Thorberg had

chipped, and Olaf bade him shape the other side in the same way, and rewarded him for the improvement. In this way does human art progress little by little—men discover the laws of fitness and contrivance, and learn to apply them to their own use.

In due time Thorberg finished the building of the ship, and made for her an arched tail, and a gilded head, and very high bulwarks, to protect the deck from the waves, and from the arrows and darts of enemies. She was also fitted with thirty-four benches for rowers; for in those days the art of navigating a ship was in its infancy, and men had made but little progress in making the most of the wind and the tide, so that when the former was unfavourable they waited until it shifted, and did not venture to beat to windward, or else they scudded before it, and thus went sadly out of their way. And it was to avoid this, as well as to be able to move about when the wind was calm, that they had recourse to the clumsy plan of rowing. Fancy, if you can, the time and labour it would require to row a ship of some hundred tons burthen across the Atlantic Ocean, from Europe to America. When the ship was finished, Olaf named it "The Long Serpent," and

he named the ship he had taken from Raud the Strong in Halogaland "The Short Serpent." They were both lavishly painted and gilded, and a row of shining white and red shields were hung over the rails all round, from stem to stern. The Long Serpent's head resembled that of a dragon, and its tail curled over the head of the steersman, so that it had a very fierce and warlike appearance.

In the waist of the vessel were placed the chests of arms, and the darts and stones for slinging; also the provisions, goods, and clothing, and all was covered over with moveable hatches. On this lower deck the crew slept at night, sheltered from the weather by an awning; but this was only when they were at sea, for whenever they were near land they landed and set up their tents on the beach, and there they passed the night, the ship being moored to the land by cables. Or, if the shore was a hostile one, they would strike the mast, and make a tent on board by hanging tilt-cloths or sails over it. These masts were seldom more than forty feet long; and as the ships of the Northmen had no standing rigging, and carried only one large square sail, there was no difficulty in using the mast in this manner. The sail itself was very gay, being made of stripes of white, blue,

and red cloth; and then Olaf set up his standard which was a large white flag with a red cross on it—an emblem of Christianity; so that altogether “The Long Serpent” presented a very showy appearance.

But Olaf would not allow her to be launched without having the benediction of the Church on her, so he sent for Bishop Sigurd to bless the ship. In our time it is a custom to christen a ship in this manner: a bottle of wine is suspended from the bow by a string, and some beautiful or distinguished lady is requested to perform the ceremony of naming the ship, which she does standing on a platform and pulling the bottle towards her, and, letting it go suddenly, by which means it is dashed against the ship and broken, and the wine runs down the ship’s bow. The ship is then said to be christened, which means dedicated to Christ—a profane sort of thing, when we reflect on its real meaning, but which has from constant use ceased to be understood to mean this. In like manner do men indulge in swearing, using oaths which they do not really wish to see fulfilled, but from a profane and thoughtless habit of using the words.

Bishop Sigurd came with all his priests and his choristers, and he celebrated high mass on board

"The Long Serpent," and sprinkled holy water over her, and blessed her; but while he did so his voice trembled, and his features grew sad, and suddenly in the midst of his prayer he paused. Then Olaf asked him what was amiss, and the venerable man looked at him full in the face, and the tears came into his eyes, as he said, "Oh, my beloved king! faithful and dutiful son of the Church, may the blessing of God and the Saviour be upon thee; but I have seen a vision, wherein thou didst appear to me, and I read on the scroll which thy *fetch* held in its hand that 'The Long Serpent' had a forked sting, which would bring evil to its owner; yet could I not clearly discern that thou shouldst die on board of her. I fear, however, that thou wilt meet with some heavy misfortune." "Amen," said Olaf, "if such be the will of God!"

CHAPTER XXII.

OLAF'S LAST WIFE.

THOSE who have followed the fortunes of Olaf thus far may remember that he had once sought in marriage Sigrid the Haughty, the cruel widow of Eric, king of Sweden, and that this woman had vowed to be revenged on Olaf for the insult he had inflicted on her by striking her in the face with his glove, and calling her an old heathen jade. This same Sigrid was now the wife of Sweyn "of the forked beard," king of Denmark, and they were both great friends of Eric, the son of Earl Hakon, the late king of Norway, of whom we shall hear more presently. The reader may also remember Burislaf, king of Vendland, the father of Olaf's first wife Geyra; he was now an old man, yet he had the weakness which many old men have—that is, a desire for a young wife, and his choice fell upon Thyri, the sister of King Sweyn; for this he had charged Earl Sigvald, his friend, to go to Denmark, and ask the hand of the

maiden in marriage for him ; and King Sweyn had agreed to the match, but Thyri had flatly refused to marry an old man and a heathen, for she was a Christian. Thus Earl Sigvald's mission was vain, and he returned to Vendland ; but the old king was not to be baffled in this manner, and he sent Sigvald back to claim of Sweyn the fulfilment of his agreement, and to bring Thyri back with him. Now Sweyn knew that Burislaaf was a powerful king, and could be of good service to him in case of a war with his neighbours, the Germans, so he delivered Thyri into Earl Sigvald's hands, stipulating that she should have the same possessions which Queen Gunhilda had enjoyed in Vendland. Thyri wept sorely, but her brother was inexorable—so she was put on board a ship with some female attendants and her foster-father, Otsur Aakeson, who offered to accompany her ; and they were all under the charge of Earl Sigvald.

At length they arrived in Vendland, where Burislaaf held his court, and they were welcomed by the old king. And he held his wedding with Thyri soon after her arrival, and caused great rejoicings to be had throughout his kingdom ; but Thyri would not sit down with him nor go near

him, nor would she eat or drink with a heathen, for she was a Christian princess, and had a horror of idolatry, while all the people around her (except Otsur her foster-father and her maids) were heathens. For seven days and seven nights did old Burislaf solicit his newly-made wife to sit at table with him, but he could not prevail on her to do so ; then he grew angry, and threatened her with punishment, and thereupon she grew frightened, and stealing out of the palace with Otsur, one dark night, she made her way into the woods. There they lay hid until they could procure a disguise, and then they set off to return to Denmark, where they arrived, after many a weary day's march and many an adventure. But she dared not stay in Denmark, for she knew that if her brother Sweyn heard she was in the country, he would send her back directly to Burislaf. Therefore, she formed the bold plan of crossing over into Norway, and seeking the protection of Olaf, and so, not entering the dominions of King Sweyn, she and Otsur made their way along the frontier to the sea, where they found a ship which conveyed them to Norway. She had still a long journey before her, for Olaf was at Nidaros, whereas she had been landed on the southernmost point of

the kingdom—yet her courage failed her not—and in time she reached Trondheim, with Otsur. The good old man presented himself before Olaf, and told him he had brought a lady of royal birth to see him, and that she had journeyed many hundred miles to accomplish her purpose. So Olaf's curiosity was roused, and he would have questioned Otsur further, but that the latter begged that the lady might be allowed to speak for herself. Then the king ordered her to be brought before him, and he received her very kindly, and seated her near him. And Thyri related to Olaf all the sorrows and troubles she had undergone, and entreated his advice and implored him to protect her. This last he readily agreed to do, and he advised her to remain where she was. Then they talked on various matters, and the king was greatly pleased with her discourse, for Thyri was as witty as well as a handsome woman: in short, Olaf's fancy was touched, and he began to think that the pretty Danish princess would make him a good wife; for he was now a widower for the third time, having caused the Church to pronounce a divorce for him from his wicked wife, Gudrun, who had tried to murder him in his sleep. Besides, Olaf wished to have a

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son who might inherit the kingdom after him, and he had not had any children by his former wives. He, therefore, turned the discourse that way, and asked her if she would marry him. If the truth must be told, it was with some such object as this in her mind that Thyri had made her way into Norway; for Olaf's fame as a handsome and bold warrior, and as a Christian king, and all that he had done to spread Christianity throughout his kingdom, were well known to her; and, moreover, she was conscious of her own wit and beauty, and was, withal, desirous of sharing the glory of converting the heathens of the north to the true faith. It is also true that she had been forced to submit to the ceremony of marriage with the old heathen, King Burislaf, but she had never admitted that a heathen priest could lawfully bind to her any one, nor would she ever admit that she was Burislaf's wife. Thus, when Olaf asked her if she would marry him, she had already prepared an answer for him; and with a show of reluctance, but inwardly congratulating herself on her good fortune, she bade him dispose of her heart and hand—which was a very neat way of saying “he might marry her as soon as he pleased.” Yet Olaf was not without *his* scruples as to the lawfulness of

taking Thyri for his wife, and he consulted Bishop Sigurd on the subject. That learned man declared that as Thyri had never given her consent to the marriage with Burislaf, it was not a binding contract,—one of the first conditions of a lawful contract being that the parties to it should be free agents, not acting under compulsion; but to make all safe (as he thought) he granted a dispensation, (that is, a discharge from all sin against the Church), to Thyri and Olaf, and they were married at Nidaros in the fall of the year of Our Lord 998. Great festivities were held in honour of the wedding, and the king and his new queen abode at Nidaros all the winter.

The next summer a child was born to Olaf, which was a stout and promising child, and both he and Thyri loved it exceedingly: it was named Harold, after Thyri's father. But alas! for the hopes and schemes of mortal men. The fond parents looked forward with hope to the day when the child would be a man and inherit the throne of his fathers; but a higher and wiser King had ruled otherwise, and sent His angel to fetch the infant away from this world when it was barely a year old. Olaf and Thyri mourned its loss for many a day.

Yet another marriage took place in the family of Olaf. This was the wedding of his beautiful sister Ingoborg, with Earl Rognvald, the nephew of Sigrid the Haughty, and governor of Western Gothland, in Sweden; which wedding was celebrated with great pomp at Sole, in Rogaland, in the presence of all the nobles and chiefs of the kingdom. But Olaf had given his consent to the marriage only on condition that Earl Rognvald would accept the true faith, and make all the subjects he ruled over be baptized. The earl agreed to this, and he and all his followers became Christians; but Olaf did not stop here, for he sent learned men back with the earl to Gothland to baptize the people there, and teach them the right faith and morals.

Then Olaf finished his festivities by a voyage to Vendland, to visit his old father-in-law, Burislaf, whom he found in good health, and who forgave him for marrying the runaway Thyri. So he returned well contented to Norway.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OLAF'S LAST WAR.

WE have passed over the happiest portion of Olaf's reign ; the short remainder of it was spent in turmoil and war. I am afraid that he was to blame for this ; but his wife, Thyri, was the originator of the mischief. The story told of her is as follows :—" Queen Thyri complained often and bitterly to King Olaf, that she, who had such great possessions in Vendland, had none in Norway suitable for a queen ; and sometimes she would entreat the king, with fine words, to get her property restored to her. But Olaf paid little attention to her entreaties. One day, however, in early spring, he was walking in the street, and met a man in the market with some large angelica roots : the king took a great stalk of one in his hand, and went home to Queen Thyri with it. She was weeping when he entered. He said, ' See here, queen, is a great angelica stalk for thee.' She threw it away, and said, ' A greater

present Harold Gormson gave to my mother; and he was not afraid to go out of the land and take his own. That was shown when he came over here to Norway, and laid waste the greater part of the land, and seized on all the scutt and revenues; but thou darest not go across the Danish dominions for this brother of mine, King Sweyn.' As she spoke thus, King Olaf sprang up and answered with a loud oath, 'Never did I fear thy brother Sweyn; and if we meet he shall give way before me!'" Such is the tale told by the old Norse poet, Snorre Sturleson, who has sung the exploits of the ancient heroes of the north.

We have said that this Danish king, Sweyn, was married to Sigrid the Haughty, who had vowed in her heart the destruction of Olaf—and she never ceased to reproach her husband for not having punished Olaf for receiving Thyri, his sister, when she fled from King Burislaf, and for marrying her in defiance, as it were, of the world. Thus the ire of Sweyn was aroused, and he was glad of a cause for quarrel with Olaf, that he might attack him and gain possession of his dominions. And in this wicked scheme he had an abettor in Earl Eric, who was the son of Earl

Hakon the Bad, the former ruler of Norway, who thought that if Sweyn should conquer Olaf, he might perhaps recover the power which his father formerly possessed. This Earl Eric was a bold and adventurous man, and second to no one in daring, except Olaf himself. When his father was surprised and slain by Olaf, Earl Eric went eastward to Olaf, king of Sweden, who received him kindly, and gave him great possessions: there he was joined by all those who had been forced to quit Norway by Olaf Tryggveson, and with them he formed a band of sea rovers, and built ships, and set forth to plunder and get money and property by violence; for these savage warriors had a mortal contempt for peaceful trade and commerce, though they were glad enough to enjoy the fruits of them. Earl Eric plundered the coasts of Gothland and Vendland, fighting when he found any one to fight with, and behaving like a common thief when he did not. Then next year he sailed up the Baltic, and ravaged the coasts of Russia with merciless fury, burning towns and villages, and killing the unfortunate inhabitants, who had never given him provocation: and all from savage lust of excitement! Five years did he continue his ravages on the sea and shores of

the Baltic. I suppose that he then grew tired of a rover's life,—at least for a while,—for I find in the history of those times, that he went to Denmark to King Sweyn, “of the Forked Beard,” and courted his daughter Gyda. He must have possessed some charms, and probably had amassed a great amount of plunder, so that the lady was not averse to the match, nor was King Sweyn. So they were married; and in winter Earl Eric and his wife lived with the king, but in summer he left her and went cruising. But when Sweyn married Sigrid the Haughty, the mother of Eric's friend, Olaf, king of Sweden, a great friendship sprung up between Earl Eric and Sigrid, as well as Sweyn.

. Now Olaf Tryggveson, having been roused by the reproaches of his queen, Thyri, convoked a general assembly, or Thing, in the town of Nidaros, and proclaimed that in the summer he was going on a grand expedition, and required men and ships from every district; and the Thing fixed the number of men and ships which each district should furnish. Thus we see that the barbarous and foolish people were easily led into a war and induced to sacrifice their lives and money, as if neither were of any value, and seemingly without

a thought as to what was to become of their wives and children, their infirm parents and relations! Are there not nations in the world now not much more enlightened? Well, Olaf sent the message-token north and south, for an army to be got together, and he ordered his great ship, "The Long Serpent," and all his other ships, to be fitted out; but the crew of "The Long Serpent" was a picked one, none but men of tried bravery and skill being put on board of her; and Olaf himself took the command. "The Short Serpent" was commanded by Thorkel Nefia, the king's brother; "The Crane" was commanded by Olaf's uncles, Thorkel Dyrdil and Jostein: then were a number of other ships well-manned and commanded by skilful captains.

But before he set out on his expedition, he took steps to proclaim Christianity in Iceland, and made it the law of that land: he also sent priests there to instruct the people, and it is related that in the course of that summer they were all baptized. King Olaf also sent Leif Eric's son to Greenland, to proclaim Christianity there, which Leif did; but he did a far greater thing than making a voyage to Greenland, for he sailed on westward from Cape Farewell, until he reached

the shores of the great continent of North America; then he sailed southward, until he found a country where there were grapes, wherefore he called the country Vine-land, or Vinland. After remaining there some time, he returned to Greenland, and told all that he had seen. And his adventurous footsteps were followed by his bold countrymen, who went over and settled there, but it is uncertain whether their remains are now to be traced there or not; some say that inscriptions written in their language have been found upon the rocks of Rhode Island. But it is certain that the discovery of America was made by them five hundred years before the time of Columbus, who has all the honour of it.

King Olaf had not much to do with it, however, though he was right glad to hear that there were new and vast countries which were open to the enterprise of man. At this time he was too much occupied with his great expedition to think of much else. King Sweyn and Earl Eric, also, roused by the counsels of Sigrid, resolved to fit out an army and ships to attack Olaf; and they sent messengers to Olaf, king of Sweden, informing him that King Olaf of Norway was fitting out an expedition, intending to go to Vendland; and

they invited him to join them with an army, so that they might all three attack him on his return. The Swedish king was pleased with the plan, and immediately levied a great army and fleet throughout all Sweden, and sailed with it to Denmark, where he arrived before Olaf had set out. King Sweyn also sent Earl Sigvald to Vendland, to spy out the proceedings of King Olaf, and to bring it about so that they should meet with him on his return from Vendland. Accordingly, Earl Sigvald went to Vendland, where he was in great favour with King Burislaf, and there he stayed until Olaf arrived. There he made friends with Olaf, and persuaded him to delay his departure for a time; meanwhile, Earl Sigvald received a message that the combined forces of the kings of Sweden and Denmark were ready, and directing him to meet them at the island of Svald, where they hoped to intercept Olaf on his return to Norway; and, if possible, he was to lead Olaf into the snare. What good Earl Sigvald was to get by all this treachery does not appear; but as for Sweyn of Denmark, Olaf of Sweden, and Earl Eric, they agreed to divide Norway between them, and "The Long Serpent" was to belong to him who first boarded her.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OLAF'S LAST BATTLE.

Now while Olaf was in Vendland there came to him a rumour that King Sweyn had fitted out an army to attack him. But Earl Sigvald persuaded Olaf that Sweyn dared not venture to do such a thing; yet he offered to aid Olaf with eleven vessels of war, manned by Iomsburg vikings, which offer Olaf thankfully accepted. Soon after a fair wind sprung up, and Olaf called his men together, and caused the war-horns to sound the signal for sailing. It was not long before all the ships were under weigh, but the small vessels, sailing fastest, got out to sea first. Earl Sigvald counselled the king to sail in his keel track, professing to know where the water was deepest, so that the large ships might steer safely between the islands and shoals; so Sigvald, with his eleven ships, and Olaf, with his eleven (for he had the same number) sailed in one line, but the rest of the ships stood out to sea. Now the fleet of

Sweyn and his allies was lying in the harbour of Svald, where it could not be seen, and as Olaf's ships approached the island, a small skiff came off to hail Earl Sigvald, and inform him of the whereabouts of Sweyn. Then the earl ordered the sails of his vessels to be struck, and they rowed in under the island; and when the commanders of Olaf's ships saw this they also let fall their sails, and rowed after him, calling out to him and asking him why he was going in shore. Sigvald answered that he was waiting for King Olaf, for he feared that enemies were lying in wait for him; so they lay upon their oars till Thorkil Nefia came up with "The Short Serpent," and the three ships which followed him; then they told him what Sigvald had said, and he, too, waited for Olaf. But when Olaf came up, the whole of the enemy's fleet came out of the harbour, and the king saw at once that he was caught in a trap, and his captains exhorted him to save himself by flight, as he could not contend with such an overwhelming force. But the gallant monarch, standing high on the quarter-deck of "The Long Serpent," called out, "Strike the sails; never shall men of mine think of flight. I have never yet fled from battle, and never will. Let God

dispose of my life." Then he ordered the war-horns to be sounded, and his ships to close up, and so he formed the line of battle. The stems and sterns of the ships were made fast together, and the chief warriors took their stations in the forecastles. King Olaf was conspicuous on the quarter-deck of "The Long Serpent," by his gilt shield, and his helmet inlaid with gold; his polished armour was partly concealed by a short red coat. There he stood, with high courage and majesty, prepared to die manfully, if his hour was come, encouraging his men by his words, and defying the worst malice of his enemies.

Soon the battle began; the ships of the enemy ranged themselves under the banners of their sovereigns and commanders. King Sweyn laid his ship against "The Long Serpent," hoping to be the first to board her, and so obtain the far-famed ship. Olaf, the Swede, laid his ship against the last ship on the right of the Norwegian line, while Earl Eric did the same on the left. As for Earl Sigvald, he kept out of the fray. The mode of fighting at sea in those days was to throw grappling irons into the enemy's ship, to drag her close, and shoot arrows, stones, and darts upon the men from the forecastles and poops, which were raised high,

and sometimes had castles, or temporary stages of timber, erected on them, wherein were stationed the fighting men. Thus Olaf, when he saw King Sweyn's ship advancing, got ready his grappling-irons, and threw them on board of her, and dragged her close under his forecastle, when his men speedily cleared her decks of those who were on them, killing the greater number, so Sweyn was glad to escape into another ship, out of the way. Then King Olaf the Swede tried his luck against the formidable "Long Serpent," but with no better success; for he, too, was glad to get out of the range of her arms. So fiercely did Olaf's men fight that the Danes and Swedes shrunk away for a time; but Earl Eric, with his Iomsburg vikings, had acted differently at his end of the line. His ship was named "The Iron Beard," and he had laid it alongside of Olaf's outermost ship, boarded it, and driven the men out of it; then he cut the cables and let it drive. Then he laid his ship alongside of the next, and fought it in like manner, and with like success; so that those who were in the small ships made their way into the large ones, while Eric was busy cutting them adrift. He and his men were armed with heavy battle-axes, and stayed not to fight at long shots,

but came at once to close quarters, where their heavy weapons told more fatally than the swords of the men of Norway. At last he cleared the smaller ships of their crews, who had all got on board "The Long Serpent," excepting the wounded, who were left drifting away in their ships. Then Eric laid "The Iron Beard" alongside of "The Long Serpent," to finish the struggle, and now the most deadly part of the conflict ensued. Eric stood on his forecastle, while Olaf placed himself in the gangway, shooting with bow and arrow, and hurling the spear. But the other ships of the enemy, seeing how Earl Eric had discomfited his foes, plucked up heart again, and joined in the fray: thus "The Long Serpent" was surrounded, and assailed with such showers of stones, darts, and arrows, that her men could with difficulty shield themselves, and they grew so mad that they rushed on board the enemy's ships, to strike down their enemies with the sword and battle-axe; but in doing this many fell overboard into the water, and sunk under the weight of their armour. Still they dashed with loud cheers upon their foes, while Olaf stood admiringly looking at them. Seeing them often strike ineffectually, he called out to them to know why they did so, when

some answered that their swords were full of notches. Then he ran down into the hold, and opening the arm chest, he took out fresh swords, and threw to them. But the odds were too great; no valour, however tried, could long contend against the numbers of the enemy. Earl Eric grew impatient, and boarded "The Long Serpent," but he was driven out with great loss; for Olaf and his brothers-in-law, Hyrning and Kolbiorn, met him hand to hand, and struck down those who were with him. When this was done, Olaf paused to recover his breath, and while standing on the gangway, close by one of his best archers, he saw Eric seated on a stool, on the poop of "The Iron Beard;" so he told the archer to shoot at him; the arrow hit the tiller head, just above the earl's head. Again the archer shot, and this time the arrow pierced the stool. Then Eric called his best bowman, and told him to shoot the archer, and the man shot and hit the middle of the archer's bow, splitting it in two. Olaf turned round, and asked what had broken with such a noise. "It is thy kingdom that has broken from thee," said the man. "It is even so," muttered Olaf.

Now all this time Olaf's men were falling fast

around him, and the defence grew weaker, so Earl Eric determined to board "The Long Serpent" again, and again he met with a warm reception; but so many of Olaf's men had fallen, that those who remained crowded to the fore-castle for the final struggle, and Eric's followers swarmed in over the sides of the ill-fated ship. Olaf stood like a noble stag at bay, and with his battle-axe kept striking down his foes, while Hyrning and Kolbiorn stood beside him to shield him from the stones and arrows. But as his men fell one by one, and his foes kept ever swarming on, he saw that all was vain. His brother, Thorkel Nefia, cried "Farewell Olaf!" and leapt overboard. Hyrning and Kolbiorn, uttering the like exclamation, did the same, but were picked up out of the water by the enemy's boats. Then Olaf, hurling his battle-axe into the midst of his foes, threw his shield over his head, and leaping overboard, sunk beneath the waters.

CHAPTER XXV.

OLAF'S LAST DAYS.

WHEN King Olaf sprang overboard, the whole of Sweyn's army raised a shout of victory, and Eric stood up proudly on the deck of "The Long Serpent," which had become his property by his being the first to board her, and because it was owing to his skill and bravery that the battle had been won. But it was an iniquitous business, and nothing short of murder to attack and destroy Olaf and his fleet while passing inoffensively from Vendland to Norway. I suppose Sweyn and Eric excused themselves to their own consciences by pretending that they stood in dread of the great armament of Olaf, and believed he had hostile intentions towards them; and certainly, if the words of Thyri had been repeated to Sweyn, there was some show of reason in this. The return of the victorious chiefs to Denmark was hailed with the loudest acclamations, and splendid festivals were made in honour of them as though they had

delivered the nation from some great danger. After that, they sailed to Norway, and they divided the country between them. King Olaf of Sweden got four districts in the Trondheim country, and also the districts of Mere and Rawnsdal, and Ranrige from the Gotha river to Swinesund; and he then gave them to King Sweyn to hold of him as his feudal lord, on payment of tribute. King Sweyn retained Viken; and Earl Eric's share was the greater part of Trondheim, all Halogaland, Naumadal, the Fiord districts, Raumarike, Hedemark, Sogn, Hordaland, Rogaland, and North Agder, all the way to the Naze. Thus was the country bereft of a monarch—just, kind, brave, and enlightened—and handed over to the mercies of foreign conquerors. History tells us, however, that their rule was but short-lived; for the Norwegians thought proper to choose a king for themselves, and they set up Olaf, the son of Harold Greenske, a prince who became as zealous a labourer on behalf of Christianity as Olaf Tryggveson had been, and was, by the Pope placed in the calendar of saints; and to this day the memory of St. Olaf is venerated. But Olaf Tryggveson; what became of him? The battle took place in the year of Our Lord 1000, according



to the received mode of computing from the birth of Christ. A thousand years had elapsed since that greatest of events : let us cast our eyes around the world and see how matters stood at this time. America had just been discovered by the Norsemen, but nothing had resulted from the discovery. Europe was in a ferment ; the tide of barbarian invasion had begun to ebb, and the various nations of modern times were in process of development. Rome was the seat of religion and learning, the acknowledged capital of the Christian world, over which Pope Silvester II. ruled with almost undisputed sway. But where *were* the Christian nations of the world ? Italy ? Spain ? and Portugal ? The two latter were half Saracen ! France was a prey to intestine disorder and Norman ravages — but professedly Christian. Germany was Christian, under Otho III. England also, with Scotland and Ireland, were obedient to the Church ; but the rest of Europe was Pagan ; — Russia, Poland, Hungary, Prussia, Sweden — swarmed with idolaters. The Greek Empire, feeble outside the walls of Constantinople, was also Christian in name ; but the Arabs, under their caliphs, and the Turks threatened its existence. In Asia the Saracen Empire was predominant,

while in the far East, in China and India, the Christianity planted by St. Thomas and the Nestorians had nearly disappeared. In Africa, if there remained any Christianity, it had taken refuge in Abyssinia. The sword was the great preacher, the great converter ; and by it were the fierce Northern races brought into the fold of the Church. In this way Olaf did good service ; he *forced* his subjects to pay respect to the Christian priests, and to listen to their teachings. Was he a good or a bad king ? a good or a bad man ?

What was his end ? When he sank in the wave he was seen by his countrymen for the last time ; he never came back to claim his kingdom ; he never reappeared to his disconsolate Thyri, who was taken back by her brother Sweyn to Denmark. There were those living who had stood by him in the fight, who saw the blood running from his body in various places, and said he was so grievously wounded that he could not have survived the conflict. But it was remarked that there was a cutter from Vendland which was witness of the battle, and had stood aloof with Earl Sigvald while it was going on : this ship held the men who had been sent to escort Olaf by Astrida the wife of Earl Sigvald, and daughter of

King Burislaf, with whom Olaf had always been a great favourite. When the fated king leapt overboard, the Vendland cutter rowed swiftly up to where he might be, and was seen to take some one out of the water, then row away swiftly to the southern shore, whence it sailed for Vendland, nor remained longer with the Danish fleet. Was Olaf on board? Had he swam and dived under the enemy's ships until he reached this cutter? Did Astrida receive him in Vendland, and tend his wounds? Did he afterwards seek the court of his early friend and patron, Vladimir the Great of Russia? Did he offer his sword and his services to the Greek Emperor, Basil II.? And was he the gallant Christian knight who drove back the Saracens from the frontiers of the Empire in many a fierce encounter? Men said he was a Christian king in disguise, and from his fair complexion, stalwart frame, and dauntless mien, they concluded that he came from the North. He was seen on his knees at the holy places; he knelt on Mount Calvary, and adored the relics of the humble roof at Nazareth; Bethlehem saw him prostrate before the evening star, and he bathed in Jordan's flood. He had received a wound in fight with an enemy of the Holy Cross, and he felt his end was nigh;

he sought consolation of a devout brotherhood, who received his latest sigh, and laid him in consecrated earth at the foot of the Mount of Olives, where a simple cross alone marked his resting-place. Was this pious Christian king, that same famous Olaf Tryggveson? If he ever revealed his true rank to the venerable monk who shrived him, that secret died with the good father. Yet rumour, with its hundred tongues breathed it to the air, and the air wafted it from the peaks of Lebanon to the peaks of the Doorefield; for somehow, it assumed a shape and came to be believed that Olaf, wounded and sinking, had been saved, and was alive for many years; but that weary of the North, and despairing of recovering his kingdom, he had journeyed eastward in search of a soldier's death and a Christian's grave. There were not wanting those who affirmed that they had seen him at the court of King Vladimir, and again at that of the Emperor Basil. But when was there ever wanting testimony to confirm a pleasing or a grievous report? Had Olaf desired to die the death of a hero, there was abundant opportunity in Spain, where the infidel proudly reigned, but strove in vain to subjugate the heroic race of Pelayo and the brave mountaineers of the

Asturias. Be this as it may, it was long believed that the gallant prince was living, but as he came not near his once beloved Norway, men's belief grew weaker and weaker, until they ceased to think of his fate. It is to this day a matter of conjecture: his body was never found, though hundreds of others who had been slain or fallen overboard had been recovered. We will not weary ourselves about it. His father murdered, himself born in secret and in exile, his mother torn from him, he sold into slavery, the favourite of a queen, the husband of a princess and master of a kingdom, a successful rover in many lands, a sincere convert to Christianity, which he lived to plant in the country of his birth, his recovery of the throne of his ancestors, his extraordinary marriages, his abrupt disappearance, and his mysterious death; do not these form a complete romance?

THE END

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